

Israeli Druze general joins Likud Party

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An Israeli reserve army general from the Druze community has joined Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing Likud Party after defecting from a new moderate party. "I came to the Likud because here I am not treated just as a Druze or the representative of some ethnic minority, but as a true Israeli," Brigadier General Amal Assad said at a press conference Thursday night. Netanyahu said Assad's decision was a boost for Likud and the government at the start of the campaign for the May 17 elections for parliament and prime minister. Assad quit the Centre Party headed by former Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai on Tuesday, reportedly complaining about his low position on the party ticket.

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1,300 Palestinians attend W. Bank protest

BEIT DAJAN (AFP) — More than a thousand Palestinians turned out in this West Bank village on Friday to back villagers in a dispute with the Israeli authorities over an olive orchard, witnesses said. A total of 1,300 Palestinians took part in the peaceful demonstration organised by the Nablus municipality and helped replant dozens of olive trees previously torn out by the Israeli army, the witnesses said. The army initially razed the orchard over a month ago, saying it had been illegally planted in an area designated "state land." Since then villagers, other Palestinians and Israeli peace activists have taken part in weekly rituals of replanting the trees only to see them uprooted a few days later.

Ukrainian gets death penalty for 52 killings

KIEV (AP) — A Ukrainian who described himself as a robot without feelings was sentenced to death on Thursday for murdering 52 people in the worst spate of killings to have hit the country in modern times. It took a judge nearly two days to read the verdict against Anatoly Onoprienko, who used a sawed-off hunting rifle, knives and axes to slaughter his victims. The 39-year-old former sailor, wearing running shoes and an oversized, hooded jacket, sat impassively in an iron cage, his eyes almost never leaving the floor. Onoprienko's murderous spree apparently began in 1989, when he robbed and killed nine people. He resumed his rampage in 1995-96, killing a total of 43 people in less than six months.

Man arrested in Melissa virus probe

TRENTON (AFP) — Authorities have arrested a New Jersey man in connection with the Melissa virus that has snarled global e-mail networks in the last week, federal and state officials said Friday. The man, identified by officials as David Smith, 30, of Aberdeen Township, New Jersey, was charged with interruption of public communication, damage to computer systems and other counts, all state charges, said Paul Loriquet of the state attorney general's office. Smith, arrested at his brother's house in central New Jersey Thursday, was freed on \$100,000 bail, the official said. Melissa, which has hit firms such as Microsoft, Intel and Lucent Technologies, may also have infected the U.S. Treasury Department.

Jesus image said to appear at school

UNION CITY (R) — The monks at the Buddhist Purple Lotus University here believe they may have an Easter miracle on their hands. Officials at the university, which opened in this city 35 kilometres east of San Francisco in 1996, say that what looks like an image of Jesus has appeared on a bumpy, unfinished concrete wall on their campus. "It's a miracle," Buddhist monk Alfred Wang told Friday's San Jose Mercury News. "[It] is to show the people to have brotherly love, to believe in Jesus again." The monks said people had first noticed a "face" on the concrete wall two years ago, and some felt it was the Virgin Mary, or Kuan Yin, the Buddhist goddess of mercy.

Radiation sources in Kazak capital

ALMATY (AP) — A prosecutor warned Friday that some 25,000 radiation sources in Kazakhstan's largest city pose a danger to the population's health and the environment. Yergali Merzadinov, the chief prosecutor of Almaty, said that the radiation is emitted from devices that have outlived their usefulness, including about 13,000 radio isotope smoke detectors used by firefighters. He said that the devices must be taken to the institute for nuclear physics' storage facilities and buried.

French skier killed in avalanche

ANKARA (AFP) — A French skier was killed and another one was injured in an avalanche on Mount Demirkazik in the southern Anatolian province of Nigde, a local official said on Friday. "A 55-year-old gentleman was killed and a woman between 30 and 35 was injured. Aid workers are currently trying to rescue her," an official at the Mumtaz Cankaya mountain resort told AFP on the phone.



A huge flag with a target symbol is displayed on Friday in Belgrade during a protest rally against NATO air strikes on Yugoslavia. Hundreds of thousands of Kosovo refugees overwhelmed relief operations in Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro and Bosnia, as Yugoslavia sought Russian military aid to wage war against NATO (AFP photo).

Belgrade seeks Russian military aid as Balkans refugee crisis deepens

Captured U.S. soldiers expected to be tried soon; NATO says over 600,000 displaced

Agencies

HUNDREDS OF thousands of refugees overwhelmed relief operations in the Balkans on Friday as Yugoslavia sought Russian military aid to wage war against NATO.

International aid agencies said they could no longer cope with the influx of refugees from Kosovo into Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia, prompting NATO to begin looking at ways to help the humanitarian effort.

President Slobodan Milosevic asked visiting Russian deputies here for Russian military aid to help defend the country against NATO air strikes that began March 24 after Belgrade rejected an autonomy accord for Kosovo, a province of Serbia, Yugoslavia's dominant republic.

"We are expecting aid in arms and military equipment and this aid should be very fast and effective," Defence Minister Pavle Bulatovic said, according to the Tanjug news agency.

Russia has been a fierce critic of NATO's air campaign on Yugoslavia but its support for Belgrade has thus far not extended beyond the diplomatic arena.

In Moscow, Russian Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Anatoly Kvashnin said military aid could be supplied to Yugoslavia "depending on the circumstances" but he ruled out any immediate supplies.

Russia sent a spy ship to the Adriatic on Friday to monitor developments in the region.

To underscore its friendship with Moscow, Belgrade offered to give Russia the remains of the U.S. F-117 Stealth plane that was shot down over northern Serbia on March 27, apparently to bolster Moscow's military intelligence.

Meanwhile, an investigation of three U.S. soldiers captured by Yugoslav forces got under way in Pristina, said Jovica Jovanovic of the Serbian provisional government in Kosovo. The three Americans were expected to have a speedy trial and be sentenced to a prison term, a Serbian official said.

At least 230,000 ethnic Albanians have been driven from Kosovo since NATO launched the bombing campaign and Belgrade ordered its forces to carry out sweeps in the province, according to the U.N. refugees office.

"The relief operation is on the verge of being overwhelmed," U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata said in Geneva.

"Our capacity to respond simply cannot keep pace with the scale of the expulsions and forced population displacement," she said.

President Bill Clinton said in Washington the United States wanted to help ethnic Albanians in Kosovo in any way possible, and that it was clear that Milosevic wanted to evict the Albanians and keep the land for Serbs.

"We cannot let that happen with impunity," Clinton said after meeting humanitarian groups at the White House.

The refugee exodus is Europe's largest since the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia, the U.N. agency said. With Serbian forces targeting Pristina, Kosovo's main city of 200,000, the refugee exodus was expected to worsen, aid officials said.

In Brussels, NATO spokesman Jamie Shea said a liaison team from the Alliance had been sent to Geneva to discuss cooperation with the international relief agencies.

"This is being treated as a matter of utmost urgency," Shea said.

Albania, the hardest hit in the region with 130,000 refugees, declared a major humanitarian emergency in the north where aid officials said they faced a "logistical nightmare."

A NATO official said in Brussels that the allies were considering an Italian proposal to put alliance troops into Albania to help the fragile Balkan state cope with the potentially destabilising wave of refugees from Kosovo.

NATO said a total of 634,000 people — about one third of the population — had been driven from their homes in Kosovo in the past year of conflict and 30,000 had been forced to leave its capital, Pristina, in the past 24 hours.

NATO accused Milosevic of seeking to destabilise the entire Balkans to drag Albania and Macedonia into a war.

Following the death of King Hussein on Feb. 7, many countries offered to extend assistance to Jordan to help steer the Kingdom through upcoming challenges.

Jordanian officials have expressed hopes of seeing these recent pledges by Arab countries and other allies translated into tangible figures.

"During the tour, bilateral relations will top Jordan's agenda and therefore, we hope to see the verbal support from our Arab brotherly and friendly countries translated into tangible realities," an official said.

A Jordanian economic team visited Saudi Arabia in late February and discussed means of reactivating institutional funds, expanding bilateral trade and encouraging Saudi investments in Jordan.

Last month news reports said Saudi Arabia planned to write off \$160 million of Jordanian debts. But these reports have neither been confirmed nor denied by officials to date.

Earlier, a local economist said the Kingdom owed the Saudi government \$45 million. Jordan also owes the Saudi Development Bank, the government's lending arm, \$125 million.

The debt amounts exclude interest which has accumulated over nearly a decade.

It is also not clear how much Jordan owes Saudi Arabia for its share of maintenance costs for the Saudi oil pipeline, Tapline. Amman had paid \$1 million per month when the pipeline was operational.

Saudi Arabia, which used to allocate about \$200 million in annual economic aid to Jordan, suspended both aid and oil supplies to the Kingdom following the 1990-91 Gulf crisis.

Since then, Jordan has relied entirely on Iraqi oil imports of some 90,000 barrels per day under a United Nations agreement.

But officials are hopeful that Riyadh will soon open its markets to Jordanian manpower and products, in addition to the Kingdom's concern that the Saudi Development Fund will again extend loans to the Kingdom, especially for much-needed programmes related to the social productivity package, which targets lower income groups.

Although the Gulf States themselves are facing economic problems stemming from the continued drop in crude oil prices, some officials are optimistic that assistance is forthcoming.

"It is unlikely that the Gulf States will not offer help to support Jordan's economy, the most pressing task for King Abdullah," said one local economist.

Last month, banking sources said the United Arab Emirates made a \$150 million long-term deposit in the Central Bank of Jordan to bolster the Kingdom's foreign currency reserves.

The Arab Monetary Fund also made a similar deposit of \$100 million. Saudi Arabia has a major say in the fund's investment decisions.

King to begin visit to Saudi Arabia on Sunday

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — His Majesty King Abdullah is due to begin a two-day visit to Saudi Arabia on Sunday for talks with King Fahd, a government official said on Friday.

The two monarchs will exchange views on issues of mutual concern and discuss ways to strengthen bilateral ties in all fields," the official, who asked not to be named, told the Jordan Times.

King Abdullah's planned visit to Saudi Arabia was announced on Thursday following Saudi Minister of State Madani Alalqi's meeting with the King. Alalqi delivered an invitation from King Fahd to King Abdullah.

"The visit will be a very important opportunity for exchanging views with our brothers in Saudi Arabia on both bilateral and regional issues," the King was quoted by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, as saying.

King Abdullah is also expected to perform the lesser pilgrimage (Umra) on behalf of his father King Hussein, in accordance with Islamic Sharia.

"King Hussein was planning to perform Umra after completing his medical treatment, but he was defeated by cancer," said the official.

Also this month, King Abdullah is scheduled to visit several Arab and Gulf States, including Syria, Egypt, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and other countries.

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Filipino pilgrims carry a wooden cross on Friday in the streets of Jerusalem's Old City to mark the non-Orthodox Good Friday (Reuters photo)

Thousands throng streets of Jerusalem for Good Friday

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Thousands of Christians packed the narrow streets of Jerusalem's Old City on Friday tracing the route that they believe Jesus Christ took on his way to his crucifixion nearly two thousand years ago.

Led by their priests and carrying large wooden crosses in imitation of Jesus, dozens of pilgrim groups stopped in succession at each of the 14 so-called Stations of the Cross along the route to say prayers and sing hymns as local Palestinian Muslims made their way to the nearby Al Aqsa Mosque for Friday prayers.

At the third station where the faithful believe Jesus first collapsed under the weight of the cross, two Muslim "scouts" cleared onlookers away from the front of the Armenian Catholic patriarchate to allow the worshippers to enter the shrine.

Large numbers of Israeli police and border guards watched over proceedings but there were no reports of any violence or of any arrests.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre itself was packed with pilgrims. A noisy crush developed as visitors vied with each other to climb the stairs to the Rock of Calvary where they believe Jesus was crucified and to kiss icons and light candles at the Tomb of Christ.

The crush in the church is likely to continue as Orthodox Christians celebrate Good Friday on April 9, a week later than their Catholic and other co-religionists.

U.S., British aircraft attack Iraqi civilian site in south, Baghdad says

BAGHDAD (AFP) — U.S. and British aircraft bombed a civilian site in their second attack on southern Iraq Friday but were chased away by Iraqi anti-aircraft artillery, a military spokesman here said.

The United States said it had launched air strikes on Iraq after violations of the southern no-fly zone but denied conducting an attack on the region earlier in the day as reported by Baghdad.

The Iraqi spokesman, quoted by the official INA news agency, said: "Twelve formations of F-14s, F-15s, F-16s and F-18s and Tornados backed by AWACS, made 25 sorties from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait beginning at 5:00 p.m. (1300 GMT)."

"One of these formations bombed a public service installation in the Basra area" in southern Iraq, he said.

They also flew over the southern areas of Al Samana, Samawa, Al Nasiriya and Amara, he said, adding: "Our anti-aircraft defences opposed the enemy aircraft, forcing them to flee to the bases from which they had taken off."

Sergeant Richard Jacobowski, a spokesman for the U.S. Central Command in Tampa, Florida, confirmed: "We did strike an Iraqi communications control facility and an Iraqi radio relay station at approximately 8:30 a.m. Eastern Standard Time (1330 GMT)."

"We were enforcing the southern no-fly zone," he said, adding that there had been two violations of the zone by three Iraqi aircraft.

However, he repeated a denial that U.S. and British planes had struck earlier at 0600 GMT, attacks that Baghdad claimed injured two people and destroyed two buildings.

"At the time the [earlier report] came out there had been no strikes," Jacobowski said.

In London, a defence ministry spokesman denied that Britain had carried out an attack on Iraq on Friday.

Britain "wasn't involved in the strikes. We didn't come under any

fire," the spokesman said.

"This morning there was an incident in which the Iraqis flew into the no-fly zone both in the north and the south, and they were seen by allied aircraft. There was no fire exchange between either the U.S. or the U.K. aircraft and the Iraqi aircraft," he said.

(Continued on page 2)

Addis Ababa denies 1,000 Eritreans missing in Ethiopia

ADDIS ABABA (AFP) — The Ethiopian government on Friday denied a claim by its Horn of Africa war rival Asmara that 1,000 Eritrean-born people were missing in Ethiopia, calling it "completely false."

"Ethiopia challenges the Eritrean authorities to provide a list of names of the supposedly missing individuals, including the dates and places of their arrests," the office of the Ethiopian government said in a statement.

On Wednesday, the Eritrean foreign ministry said that about 1,000 Eritrean-born civilians had been missing for several months in Ethiopia, which has been embroiled in a border conflict with Eritrea since last May.

"The Ethiopian government encourages Eritrea to involve third parties in the verification process," Addis Ababa's statement said.

The two countries have traded accusations of

human rights violations in the treatment of their respective citizens.

Asmara said it had appealed to "several humanitarian organisations" to seek information about the missing people and to obtain their release if they are being detained.

The two countries have accused each other of expelling tens of thousands of their respective nationals since the start of the border war.

Sudan government says river water safe

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudan's health minister on Friday said first tests of samples of water and fish taken from the southern Bahr Al Jebel River have shown that the water is suitable for human and animal use.

Health Minister Mahdi Babu Nimir said that on learning of reported contamination, he dispatched teams from the central Khartoum laboratory to Juba, the main city in south Sudan, lying on the Bahr Al Jebel, to examine the water and dead fish.

"The teams are still conducting examinations, though the preliminary tests showed that the water is suitable for human and animal use," Nimir said in a press statement.

Local authorities in Juba, which is the government-held main town in the largely rebel-controlled south, earlier said that the laboratory team had

been rushed down from Khartoum because of contamination of the river.

They issued a health warning, but said that no casualties had been reported.

Nimir said that the Juba hospital had not received any cases of poisoning while witnesses said they had seen birds and animals in a normal state after drinking the water.

Witnesses also said that people in Juba were not harmed after having fish meals, he added.

Dead fish, hippopotami and crocodiles were seen floating on the surface of the Bahr Al Jebel due to unidentified contamination, the daily Alwan reported from Juba on Thursday. Nimir neither denied nor confirmed the reports.

The Khartoum newspaper said residents began noticing the carcasses last Friday, adding that a number of hippos had fled into the bush.

'S. Arabia, Iran have common strategic interests'

TEHRAN (AFP) — Former Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati said he hoped to see Iranian-Saudi ties grow as the two countries share strategic objectives, the official IRNA news agency reported Friday.

"If the two countries' relations improve in future it would be likely that the two would follow common strategic goals," Velayati, who is diplomatic adviser to Iran's supreme guide, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, told Qatari satellite television.

"Iran and Saudi Arabia might differ on certain issues but share many commonalities, and there is the possibility that their ties would expand," he said. Relations between Tehran and Riyadh have improved considerably since moderate Iranian President Mohammad Khatami was elected in May 1997.

Saudi defence minister is due to visit Iran at the beginning of May.



PALESTINIAN DEMONSTRATION: A Palestinian youth shouts during a demonstration in Beit Dajan in the north of the West Bank over a long-running dispute with the Israeli authorities over a Palestinian-owned olive orchard outside the village. Some 300 people attended (AFP photo)

Saddam's son serves up April fool's jokes

BAGHDAD (AP) — It was page one news in Iraq: Food ration baskets soon would include bananas, candy bars, Pepsi — treats Iraqis struggling under years of harsh sanctions cannot afford.

The story caught the eyes of many, some whom bought Thursday's newspaper only to find out more.

But sweet news turned sour six pages later. "Do not believe the report because it is April fool's!" said Al Zawra weekly, published by President Saddam's eldest son, Uday.

Iraqis, living under the U.N. economic sanctions imposed after Saddam's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, receive only basic foods through a government-controlled rationing programme. Luxuries, such as fresh fruits and chocolates, are available, but are extremely expensive.

Uday owns other media that participated in April fool's day ruses.

Babil, Uday's influential daily newspaper, reported on page 1 that Russian President

Boris Yeltsin threatened to bomb Washington unless the United States ends air strikes on Iraq and stops patrolling the nation's northern and southern skies.

Page two set readers straight: "April fool's! ... Iraqis do not count on anybody. ... You only have yourselves!" Uday's Al Shabab TV and a radio station he owns interrupted broadcasts Thursday with reports that left Iraqis unsure what to believe.

Many people called to express their outrage at a report that Iraqi singer Kadhim Al Sahir had divorced his wife to marry again and the wedding would be broadcast live on television.

Al Sahir lives in Cairo; his wife and two children live in Canada.

Others called to extend condolences at the reported death of Latifa, a popular Tunisian singer who has been hospitalised in Paris recently for an undisclosed ailment.

Both reports, they soon were told, were mere April foolery.

U.S., British aircraft attack Iraqi site

(Continued from page 1)

But an Iraqi military spokesman said that "two citizens were injured and two buildings were destroyed by enemy bombing in the south led by U.S. and British planes," in the first such incident in two weeks, an Iraqi military spokesman said.

He did not specify if the wounded were civilians or military personnel.

U.S. and British fighter planes had entered Iraqi airspace at 9:00 a.m. (0600 GMT) before being "intercepted and repulsed" by the Iraqi air force and surface-to-air missiles, he said, quoted by INA.

He added that U.S. and British planes had carried

out "18 sorties from Kuwaiti airspace and 33 sorties from Saudi airspace."

Friday's incident broke a two-week lull in almost daily strikes by U.S. and British aircraft in the no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq.

The last attack occurred March 19 when one Iraqi was injured during air strikes by U.S. and British planes in the south, which a U.S. military spokesman said came after "Iraqi aircraft violations" of the no-fly zone.

U.S. and British planes have been stationed in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait since the end of the 1991 Gulf War and are mostly involved in patrolling the southern no-fly zone.

Libya to open diplomatic mission in Netherlands

AMSTERDAM (R) — Libya has asked the Netherlands for permission to open a diplomatic mission in connection with the forthcoming Lockerbie trial, the foreign ministry said on Friday.

"They have indeed made that request [to open a diplomatic mission], and it is linked with the trial," a ministry spokeswoman told Reuters.

Libya has no diplomatic mission in the Netherlands at present, she said, adding Libya's wish had been prompted by the desire to offer consular support to the two men suspected of involvement in the Lockerbie bombing.

"They want to have a branch here... and given we have always had diplomatic links with them, even when they had no embassy in the Netherlands, that is not unusu-

al. We have an embassy in Tripoli as well," she said.

It was impossible to say how long it would take for the mission to be officially opened, she said, adding the usual procedures to establish such an office would be applied.

The diplomats would have diplomatic immunity, she said.

Two Libyans suspected of involvement in the 1988 bombing of a U.S. airliner over the Scottish town of Lockerbie are expected in the Netherlands soon.

They are suspected of having planted the suitcase bomb which blew up Pan Am Flight 103 on Dec 21, 1988 — killing 270 people in the air and on the ground — and will be tried in the Netherlands before a panel of three Scottish judges.

Belgrade seeks Russian military aid as Balkans refugee crisis deepens

(Continued from page 1)

"It is becoming increasingly clear that President Milosevic, having ethnically cleansed large areas, is driving enormous amounts of refugees south and west to destabilise neighbouring countries such as Albania and Macedonia," NATO's military spokesman Air Commodore David Wilby said in Brussels.

"We are no longer facing an internal Yugoslav crisis. We are facing a crisis of the entire region with far-reaching consequences," said Shea.

In Montenegro, Serbia's much smaller sister republic in the Yugoslav Federation, the government, which opposes Milosevic, called for calm amid rumours that units of the Yugoslav army were preparing a coup there.

"We have evidence to show that [Milosevic] is preparing a coup against Montenegro," a senior British defence ministry official, Edgar Buckley, told a London news conference.

NATO Secretary General Javier Solana warned Milosevic that the alliance would thwart any such attempt.

"We have plans to stop him if he plans to take that direction," Solana told Reuters television news in an interview.

Concerns also mounted internationally as to whether Kosovo Albanian moderate leader Ibrahim Rugova was under duress when he joined Milosevic in Belgrade Thursday to call for a peaceful solution to the Kosovo conflict.

"We are very concerned that what Rugova said was said under duress," British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook

told BBC Radio. "We suspect the reason his views have been changed in public statements is pressure applied to him by Serbs," Cook said in London.

French communist leader Robert Hue said Friday he had asked Prime Minister Lionel Jospin to invite Kosovo's moderate leader Ibrahim Rugova to Paris to clear up doubts over statements attributed to him this week.

Hue said on Radio France Inter: "I have proposed to the prime minister that he invite Rugova quickly to France so that we can hear his ideas freely."

French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine said Friday Rugova would be a welcome guest in France.

The meeting between Milosevic and Rugova was generally viewed with suspicion by foreign governments.

Solana said he had doubts as to whether Rugova had signed the statement of his own accord.

A source close to the Serbian police said Rugova was heading for home in Pristina Friday after the meeting.

Low lying clouds over Yugoslavia forced NATO to abort half of its air strike missions overnight, a NATO official said Friday.

But Air Marshal John Day, the director of British operations in Kosovo, said the NATO force has inflicted serious blows on Milosevic's military, which he said was now running critically short of fuel in some areas.

NATO said Thursday night's air strikes had hit an unspecified military facility in the Serbian town of Vranje, 300 kilometres south of Belgrade, and

that all planes returned safely.

Serbia's official Tanjug news agency had earlier reported that four allied missiles struck an army barracks in Vranje, which lies just to the east of Kosovo.

Meanwhile, the Belgrade independent radio B92, which was closed by authorities on Friday, will take the case to court, its lawyer Nebojsa Samardzic said.

Serbian court officials and police shut down the radio, and appointed an aide to Milosevic as the new station manager, B92 reporters told AFP.

Veran Matic, the radio's editor-in-chief, said the officials ordered satellite broadcasts be stopped and sealed the Belgrade studios.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19
PROGRAMME TWO

19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Portraits
19:30 News headlines
19:33 Des Chiffres et des Lettres
20:00 Worldnet
20:30 The Pretender
21:15 Ancient Civilizations
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature film - "Panic in the Skies"

PRAYER TIMES

04:58 Fajr
06:18 (Sunrise) Dhuha
12:39 Dhuhur
16:12 'Asr
19:00 Maghreb
20:19 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifich, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811
St. Athanasius Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifich Tel. 5920146
The Uniate Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Temperatures are expected to rise gradually with moderate and stable weather conditions prevailing. Skies will be partly cloudy and winds northeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be moderate, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min/Max temp.
Amman 06/19
Aqaba 13/25

Deserts 04/20
Jordan Valley 13/25

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 17 Aqaba 25. Humidity readings: Amman 30 per cent, Aqaba 39 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun 05/11
Jerash 08/19
Um Qays 09/19
Madaba 07/17
Petra 08/18
Dead Sea 11/23

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

AMMAN:
Dr. Khalid Asfur 533600
Dr. Bilal Al Sayid 4890280
Dr. Awni Hawandeh 5332350
Dr. Tawfik Qub'ain 4623029

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy 5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy 557004
Rukn Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'arneh (02)250080
Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Akram Haddad (05)985550
Palestine Pharmacy (05)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192.462111, 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 4775121
Highway Police 5343402
Traffic Police 4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Police Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 489467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 4773111
Radio Jordan 4774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information. 44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport .44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic, Abdi 5666131/7
Husseini Medical Centre 5856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 4644281/6
Alshah Maternity 4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5607431
Jordan Hospital 5607550
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667279
Al-Ahli, Abdali 56641646
Italian, Al-Mubajreen 4771101/23
Al-Bashir 4775111/26
Army, Marka 4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5157100
Amal Hospital 5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000
Jerusalem Hospital 4387181

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Roman Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital (02) 7101372, (02) 7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital

(02) 7102831, (02) 7102011
Speciality Hospital (02) 7103100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)2014111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport. Tel. (44)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (44) 52700 or (44) 523250. Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:00 Tehran (RJ)
07:15 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
09:30 Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
09:35 New Delhi (RJ)
09:45 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
10:15 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
10:30 Beirut, Damascus (IRJ)
10:35 Colombo (RJ)
15:00 Cairo (RJ)
17:25 Manchester (RJ)
18:10 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

18:10 London, Berlin (RJ)
18:10 Limoges (France) (add) (RJ)
19:00 Frankfurt (RJ)
22:50 Larnaca (RJ)
22:55 Brussels, Rome (RJ)
23:30 Brussels (add) (RJ)
00:45 Paris (RJ)
00:50 Jeddah (RJ)
01:30 Jeddah (RJ)
01:40 Madrid (RJ)
01:59 Jeddah (RJ)
04:30 Jeddah (RJ)
06:15 Bangkok, Doha (RJ)

Other Flights
13:15 Riyadh (SV)
13:20 Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
14:30 Milan (AZ)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
18:00 Dubai, Damascus (EK)
18:40 Beirut (ME)
19:05 Paris (AF)
20:30 Frankfurt (LH)
21:35 Cairo (MS)
22:55 London, Damascus (BA)
01:00 Belgrade (JU)
01:15 Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)

Royal Wings (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
08:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
18:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:30 Beirut (RJ)

05:30 Manchester (add) (RJ)
07:00 Limoges (France) (add) (RJ)
09:20 Frankfurt (RJ)
11:00 Brussels (RJ)
11:15 Rome, Brussels (RJ)
11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:30 Cairo (RJ)
12:00 Geneva, Paris (RJ)
12:00 Aqaba, Madrid (RJ)
13:05 London (RJ)
16:55 Riyadh, Jeddah (add) (RJ)
19:35 Larnaca (RJ)
20:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
20:40 Bombay (RJ)
21:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
23:30 Dhahran (RJ)
00:30 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
02:30 Manchester (RJ)
03:15 Jeddah (RJ)
03:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
05:00 Madrid (RJ)

Other Flights
06:15 Damascus, London (BA)
06:30 Larnaca (CY)
14:10 Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (GF)
14:45 Riyadh (SV)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
15:50 Milan (AZ)
19:00 Dubai (EK)
20:00 Beirut (ME)
22:35 Cairo (MS)
02:10 Belgrade (JU)
02:15 Amsterdam (KL)
05:50 Damascus, Frankfurt (LH)

Royal Wings (RW)
06:00 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
19:45 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)



Minister President of the German State of Bavaria Edmund Stoiber signs a condolence registry at the Jordanian Consulate in Munich. Looking on are Honorary Consul Neu Meister and prominent Jordanian businessman Akram Habib (photo courtesy Al Ra'i)

Rights group appeals to King to 'use influence' in press law changes

By Amy Henderson

AMMAN — An international press freedoms group has asked His Majesty King Abdullah to "use his influence" in having a new press law enacted that protects journalists' freedoms and Jordanians' right to be freely informed.

In a letter addressed to the King, the Paris-based Reporters Sans Frontiers said that the groups "welcomed the announcement by your government that the press law enacted last September is to be reviewed."

"You are fully aware that the new press law is not satisfactory in terms of freedom of expression," as has been pointed out by most international human rights organisations," wrote RSF Secretary General Robert Menard. "This law, which is too restrictive, should be repealed. Under its provisions, a court may close down any newspaper under investigation for violations of the press law until a final verdict in the case is reached. Democratic debate was jeop-

ardised by such a stringent law."

The group asked King Abdullah to "use his influence" to have a new law enacted, in compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ratified by Jordan.

International human rights organisations have been lobbying the government since 1997, supporting local journalists in their effort to stave off new legislation on the press. Their finally efforts failed last summer when the two Houses of Parliament endorsed the 1998 Press and Publications Law that replaced the 1993 law, which was recognised as the most liberal legislation on the press in the country's history.

Last month, Human Rights Watch also appealed to Minister of Information Nasser Lawzi to urge the government to uphold Jordan's treaty obligations under the ICCPR. The government of Prime Minister Abdur-Raouf S. Rawabdeh has shown more willingness than the previous one to reopen the press law

file. The premier has already hosted one meeting with the Jordan Press Association. The premier instructed the JPA to suggest amendments and said that all concerned parties, including the judiciary, should coordinate a comprehensive study of the necessary changes. That meeting was followed by others with Chief of the Royal Court Abdul Karim Kabariti and then King Abdullah.

Director of the Press and Publications Iyad Qattan told the Jordan Times that the legal department of the PPD last week submitted to Rawabdeh a list of recommended changes to the controversial law.

"The changes are mostly concentrated on the long list of prohibitions, which has been, in our recommendations, reduced to one half or one third of the prohibitions that exist," he said. "It also does not recommend any new prohibitions."

Qattan said that the legal team also suggested that Article 50, which allows the Court of First Instance to order

closed any newspaper under investigation for violations of the law. The article is the first to give a branch of government the right to close a newspaper. The director also said that the PPD recommended that most of the crushing fines dictated in the law be abolished. Instead, he said, the recommendations suggest that the courts, particularly when dealing with slander and libel cases, refer to the penal code.

However, many journalists in the past complained that authorities have exploited the penal code in order to legally arrest and detain journalists — provisions for which have not been included in previous press laws.

"There is a misconception that the penal code grants the right of arrest," said Qattan. "Arrest is the prerogative of the attorney general and no one else."

Other changes include closing "procedural loopholes" that were discovered in implementing the new law, Qattan said.

CPJ documents Jordan's press freedoms violations

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Committee to Protect Journalists has released its annual publication documenting press freedoms violations around the world in 1998 and has documented 18 violations in Jordan.

In its book "Attacks on the Press — 1998," the New York-based CPJ wrote that 1998 saw a "continued deterioration of press freedoms. [The 1998 Press and Publications Law's] ratification... on September 1, 1998, marked the culmination of a year-long battle between journalists and the government of (former) Prime Minister Abdur Salam Majali, which had introduced

similarly draconian amendments to the Press and Publications Law in May 1997."

According to the CPJ, six journalists were imprisoned last year. They were Omar Qoulab and Sami Zubaidi of the weekly newspaper Al Bilad, Abdul Hadi Raji Majali of Al Arab Al Yawm, Hussein Al Umoush of Al Arab Al Yawm, who was twice imprisoned. All cases were documented between March 2, 1998 and August 10, 1998. The Majali government resigned under pressure on August 19, 1998.

Also during the same period, CPJ documented seven

cases of legal action against journalists in the Kingdom. Cases documented included that of Bassam Badarin, correspondent of the London-based Al Quds Al Arabi, who was charged with "distorting Jordan's image abroad, harming state relations with a friendly country and offending the state" after the publication of a series of articles published in late 1997. CPJ also wrote that "On three occasions, there were media blackouts on coverage of major events, such as the trial of leading political opposition figure Laith Shbeilat, a triple homicide in Amman (the Shmeisani murders) and [last summer's]

water pollution crisis." The CPJ said that in spite of many gestures from the government of former Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh, who replaced Majali, "self-censorship remained widespread."

In its book, the CPJ listed Majali and his government in its "Enemies of the Press: The 10 Worst Offenders of 1998."

The CPJ said last year 24 journalists in 17 countries had been murdered in "revenge for revealing unwelcome truths, assassinated in callous disregard of the universal right to free expression, killed as a consequence of political or military upheaval."

Government studying release of some Arab Afghans

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — The government is discussing releasing some prisoners who were not included in the general amnesty signed by His Majesty King Abdullah last month.

Those involved in the case that came to be known as the Arab Afghans are included in the discussion, Justice Minister Hamzeh Haddad said Friday.

Haddad said he will submit a report to Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh, who instructed the minister to thoroughly study their charges and sentences.

The minister told the Jordan Times that all members of the group had been charged with "planning terrorist acts and the possession of explosives."

The general amnesty, endorsed by Parliament last month, excluded those charged with com-

mitting terrorist acts.

Several thousands have benefited from the amnesty, but those convicted of theft, bribery, embezzlement, premeditated murders, espionage and slavery remain accountable to the law.

Following a thorough study of the files, Haddad said he believes that at least one group member, whom he did not name, might be eligible for the amnesty "because he was not charged with terrorist acts."

"I think these people need a special amnesty which must be authorised by His Majesty King Abdullah," the minister said.

The 18-member group was accused in 1995 of plotting and carrying out bomb attacks in public places and of planning to assassinate Jordanian and Palestinian peace negotiators with Israel.

Eleven members were sentenced to death, and

the remaining seven were given different jail terms.

The death sentences were later commuted to life imprisonment by the High Court of Justice in 1995.

During the trial, the State Security Court cleared Mohammad Khalifah, a Saudi national, who was accused of financing the group, which was led by Abdullah Hasbaika.

The group's name stemmed from their purported links with Arab volunteers who fought Soviet troops in Afghanistan during the eight-year-old invasion of Soviet Union of Afghanistan.

On Thursday the families of the Arab Afghans staged a sit-in demanding the release of their kin. They later met with Haddad to press for their release.

The minister said he will study the file of another six prisoners

convicted of the attack on intelligence office in Baqaa Refugee Camp in 1996, who also were not included in the amnesty.

During last month's amnesty, several prisoners involved in armed attacks, possession of explosives and members of an illegal political party who were sentenced to different jail terms, were released in line with the amnesty.

News reports in the Arab press indicated that opposition leaders are preparing to petition the government to include a Jordanian soldier who was convicted of killing seven Israeli schoolgirls. In 1997, the State Security Court sentenced Ahmad Dakameh to life imprisonment with hard labour for killing the girls, who were on a field trip to the Peace Park in Baqoura in March 1997.

Hashemite Charity to send relief to Kosovo

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Hashemite Charity

Organisation will send relief supplies to Kosovo in implementation of His Majesty King Abdullah's directives to help the victims of the Serbian attack, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Abbadi said on Friday.

The supplies will include tents, medical equipment, medicines and food to be dispatched the following week.

"We are coordinating with the responsible authorities in Albania to ensure the arrival of the supplies and their distribution to the people of Kosovo who have been driven out of their homes and country," added the minister.

Noting that the HCO has been dispatching similar relief and emergency supplies to various Muslim nations affected by tragedies and conflicts, Abbadi said the supplies to the Kosovo people are being donated by Jordan's private and public organi-

sations including pharmaceutical firms.

"The Jordanian government is angered and shocked because of the ongoing repression against the people of Kosovo and denounces the Serbian government's obstinacy and its disregard to the international efforts seeking to find a just and peaceful solution to the Kosovo problem," a government statement said on Thursday.

It also added that "the Jordanian government calls on the Belgrade government to immediately respond to international efforts, sign the agreement concluded recently in France to help end the violence, enable the displaced Kosovo people to return to their homeland safely and allow Yugoslavia to return to the international fold."

Also "the Jordanian government reiterates its support for the people of Kosovo and calls for an immediate halt to their sufferings," the statement said.

Jordan scraps censorship of all foreign publications

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh

AMMAN — Jordan has scrapped a 70-year old law demanding that all foreign and Arab periodicals be viewed by state censors before they hit the newsstands as part of government efforts to introduce greater freedoms, an official said on Friday.

However, the decision excluded pornographic materials as well as publications prepared by religious missionaries, said Iyad Qattan, head of the Press and Publications Department.

The PDD, affiliated to the Ministry of Information, had been responsible for censoring all foreign, Arab and local periodicals as well as books by demanding to see copies of them before they are distributed.

"This is the first time in the history of the department to lift this censorship from foreign newspapers and magazines," Qattan said. "The decision is part

of a new era in Jordan," he added.

The PPD's censorship methods included colouring in black, cutting out pages from foreign magazines, or banning the entire magazine if it exhibited pictures of semi-naked or naked women and sexually explicit articles, in addition to materials that might be offensive to religions, or material considered controversial in any way.

"Non-pornographic magazines, such as fashion or medical ones, that would occasionally show semi-naked women were banned before despite the fact that the aim of such pictures was not pornographic," Qattan said adding that real "porno" magazines are not imported or distributed in Jordan.

Qattan, who assumed office as PPD director six months ago, said only three "porno" magazines were banned from entering during that time.

Construction begins on new traffic tunnels

AMMAN (Petra) — The Amman Municipality has started constructing two new tunnels in Hashemi Shamali to ease traffic congestion. A municipality announcement on Friday said the first one-way tunnel will link Hashemi Street with Army Street. It said the second will link Army Street with Independence Street. Digging of the tunnels has begun and traffic is being diverted, officials said. The munici-

pality said the project, which was awarded to a local firm, will ease traffic flow at Yarmouk Street in eastern Amman. Over the past few years, the Amman Municipality has opened several tunnels to ease traffic congestion within the capital. Among those were the tunnels dug at Wadi Haddadeh, the Fifth Circle, Independence Street and the Third Circle.

U.S. embassy to host annual computer show

AMMAN (J.T.) — The American Embassy opens its annual computer show on Tuesday at the Radisson SAS Hotel.

The Seventh Annual American Computer Show will be held under the patronage of His Excellency Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh.

The show is organised by the American Business Centre at the embassy. This year, 38 local companies, representing dozens of U.S. computer hardware and software products and services, will display the latest American computer technologies.

The two-day show will also feature seminars. The AMIR Programme and the Jordanian Society for the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights will present a seminar on copyright enforcement, including an overview of the Jordanian Copyright Law on April 8 from 7:30-9:30 p.m. In addition, the following companies will conduct seminars during the show: Al Ghanem Computer Systems & Solutions, ARAMEX International Courier, FASTLINK, Firsonet, the Jordan Computer Society, MediaScope, Radisson SAS Hotel Amman, Sinan integrated Systems, Telecommunication and Networks Co. Ltd. (TEN), and the Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Jordan Ltd.

Companies will feature new products, including Silicon Graphics' Visual NT Workstation; Apple's IMAC Flavors and PC G3; Global Voice Systems UltraVox Voice Mail/Auto Attendant Systems; Eidas Imagine software in remote sensing; IBM's Via Voice (voice recognition) software; E-business concept and detachable keyboard with touchpad; QMS' colour laser printer and colour copier; new Adobe software, and Motorola's Flex Paging System.

This year's show is sponsored by ACCESS, Al Ghanem Computer & Solutions, ARAMEX International Courier, FASTLINK, Firsonet, the Jordan Computer Society, MediaScope, Radisson SAS Hotel Amman, Sinan integrated Systems, Telecommunication and Networks Co. Ltd. (TEN), and the Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Jordan Ltd.

Computer Show Hours

The Computer Show will open April 7-8, from 10:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m. for business people (free of charge upon presentation of a business card), and from 5:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m. for the general public (admission for the general public is 500 fils).

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

Swedish film "The Seventh Seal" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, on Tuesday April 6 at 6:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

"Photos from Berlin" by Bassam Lahoud at the University of Jordan. Faculty of Humanities, until April 5.

"Display of Iraq Al Amir collection at Iraq Al Amir project, until April 29. (Tel. 5699141/2)

"Amman... A Meeting Point" by Swedish artists Ann Edholm and Hakan Rhenberg at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists, until April 22.

Mujib Reserve reopens after winter break

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — Tourists, bird-watchers, adventurers and researchers can again enjoy visiting the globally-important Mujib Nature Reserve, which reopened last Thursday after its annual winter closure.

The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) said only 25 nature enthusiasts a day will be allowed to enter the site in order to help preserve the reserve's unique biodiversity and protect its endangered fauna and flora.

According to the society, Mujib, which sits on the Great Rift Valley linking Africa with Asia, forms a safe haven for migratory birds and is home to at least 10 globally-threatened plant and animal species.

Twenty endangered Nubian ibex bred in captivity were recently released into the Mujib Nature Reserve to supplement the country's small natural population.

The 215-square-kilometre-reserve, established in 1986, has one of the cleanest and least disturbed river systems left in Jordan. It is part of the water catchment for the Dead Sea and has flowing water year around. It flows to the Dead Sea through a narrow sandstone gorge lined with palm trees and lush vegetation.

Earlier this year, the government and the RSCN ended a controversy over a proposed diversion dam on the Mujib River and signed a memorandum of understanding to construct an environment-friendly dam. The memorandum con-

cerns an ecology-friendly water extraction of the Mujib River area, alongside the reserve, and the construction of a low dam across the mouth of the river to supply hotels, industries and agriculture around the Dead Sea and in Ghor Safi.

The JD300,000 eco-tourism development project will include setting up a visitors centre in the reserve, a small lagoon, a campsite and a cantilevered walkway on the rock wall of the Mujib gorge.

The RSCN, a non-governmental society which manages six nature reserves and has plans to set up another seven, was formed in 1966 and is responsible for protecting the Kingdom's natural resources, wildlife and wild areas.

Yeltsin ousts chief lawman probing money laundering

MOSCOW (AFP) — President Boris Yeltsin tried for a second time Friday to sack his chief prosecutor a day after the lawman said he had evidence of the Russian elite laundering dirty money through Swiss bank accounts.

Yeltsin ordered Yuri Skuratov to be suspended for abuse of power, and urged the upper house of parliament, which last month flatly refused to approve the chief prosecutor's ouster, to agree to sack the official.

Russian television and news agencies reported that Skuratov had left the prosecutor's office early on Friday, criticising his dismissal as "absolutely illegal." His office was sealed and a new security detail was ordered to prevent him entering the building.

Yeltsin's move is the latest twist in an extraordinary turn of events which has pitted the crusading prosecutor and his allies in parliament against the Kremlin and the business barons who have benefited controversially from the Yeltsin reform years.

Skuratov has no shortage of enemies due to corruption probes into everyone from Central Bank officials to the so-called "oligarchs", notably including the shadowy Boris Berezovsky. Some of his investigations have led up to and inside the gates of the Kremlin itself.

Yeltsin first tried to oust Skuratov in February, but the upper house Federation Council refused to ratify it, claiming that Skuratov was the victim of a crude blackmail attempt, involving a videotape apparently showing him cavorting with prostitutes.

Russia's security chief Vladimir Putin said Friday that experts believed that the tape was authentic, but that the authorities suspected powerful elements of orchestrating the blackmail attempt.

"We have reason to believe that these and other events have been paid for by people who are the subject of criminal investigations who are being probed by the prosecutor general," Putin told the private NTV television.

The authenticity of the tape nonetheless enabled Yeltsin to

maintain that Skuratov was not fit for office as he had committed "actions which besmirch the honour of the prosecutor's work," according to a Kremlin statement sent to AFP.

A criminal investigation into Skuratov's actions has been launched, and the president was entirely within his rights to suspend the official for the duration of the probe, Kremlin officials said.

The timing of the Kremlin offensive however was remarkable, coming barely a day after Skuratov sent a letter to Yeltsin hinting at the latest target of his seemingly inexhaustible investigations.

"Fairly well-known," Russian figures had opened Swiss bank accounts with "the Russian underworld's money," he told NTV on Thursday evening. "This dirty money will attract gangsters and then Switzerland will cease to be a quiet country."

Skuratov discussed the dirty money problem late last month with his Swiss counterpart Carla del Ponte, who urged him to investigate a Swiss company called Mabex which was suspected of bribing senior Kremlin officials.

On the same day, police sealed off several Kremlin offices and confiscated secret documents to check whether the Swiss company, which was renovating top Moscow government offices, had paid kickbacks to win the lucrative contracts. Mabex has denied any wrongdoing.

Communists in parliament meanwhile, eager to seize on any opportunity to garner further evidence in their impeachment drive against Yeltsin, said that the move to oust Skuratov was "unconstitutional" and proved the president was trying to protect Russia's shadowy oligarchs.

"Yeltsin is openly defending the mafia today," said Viktor Ilyukhin. "Yeltsin has become dangerous for the people and for Russia."

Party chief Gennady Zyuganov added: "It's one more confirmation for all deputies and for the whole country that he is not capable of fighting corruption because he is a malicious lawbreaker."



Russian President Boris Yeltsin looks as the newly appointed executive secretary of the Commonwealth of Independent States Yuri Yarov takes his seat during a meeting in the Kremlin April 2 (Reuters photo)

Russia's Berezovsky never shirked controversy

MOSCOW (R) — Boris Berezovsky, dismissed on Friday as secretary of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), rose from car salesman to Kremlin power-broker in a controversial career which made him many enemies along the way.

Never too shy for a headline, he accused senior KGB officers in the former KGB security police of trying to kill him, called for the Communist Party to be outlawed for anti-Semitism and clashed bitterly with "young reformers" over privatisation deals.

But it was his reputed behind-the-scenes influence, as a friend of President Boris Yeltsin's family and a financier of his 1996 reelection campaign, that stirred the most emotions.

As Yeltsin's star waned along with his failing health and Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov — never close to Berezovsky — took up the reins of day-to-day power, the businessman also fell from favour.

The leaders of the 12-member CIS, the loose body created when the Soviet Union collapsed, approved Yeltsin's request to sack Berezovsky during a summit in Moscow.

Berezovsky, speaking in the Ukrainian capital Kiev after his private plane was denied permission to land in Moscow, put a brave face on his dismissal and his replacement as CIS secretary by loyal Yeltsin aide Yuri Yarov.

"If the presidents of the CIS consider the naming of Yarov fine, then it is fine," said Berezovsky, who is 53. He founded the Logovaz chain of car dealerships in 1989 and has been widely reported to have large stakes in oil companies, airlines and the media, although he denies some of the reports.

He has held several official posts, including a spell as deputy secretary of the influential Security Council advisory body. He was appointed executive secretary of the CIS in April 1998 with a brief to reinventorise

the feeble organisation.

His influence in the Kremlin is widely believed to have gone deeper than the official posts he has occupied would suggest.

Last year, Berezovsky's Nezavisimaya Gazeta newspaper repeatedly called on Yeltsin to sack then Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko and replace him with ex-Premier Viktor Chernomyrdin.

In August, Yeltsin sacked Kiriyenko and but parliament foiled his efforts to bring back Chernomyrdin. The episode led Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov to compare Berezovsky in parliament to Rasputin, the monk who wielded sinister influence over the family of the last Russian tsar, Nikolai II.

The new prime minister, Primakov, signalled his dislike of Berezovsky and made clear he wanted his government to be free of any influence from business groups.

Berezovsky lost a key source of influence in

December when Yeltsin sacked Valentin Yumashev as head of his administration.

Married with six children, Berezovsky is a member of Russia's prestigious Academy of Sciences and was once named by Vanity Fair magazine as one of the world's 65 most powerful people — the only Russian on the list apart from Yeltsin.

He was born in Moscow on Jan. 23, 1946. After graduating from the Moscow Institute of Timber Technology in 1967 and doing post-graduate research at Moscow University, he embarked on an academic career as an engineer.

As deputy secretary of the Security Council from October 1996 to November 1997, he helped implement the peace deal that ended Russia's war with the rebel Chechnya region. Since then he has been a go-between in talks to free hostages in Chechnya.

Troops bring fragile calm to Indonesia's Maluku province

AMBON, Indonesia (AFP) — Troop reinforcements brought a fragile calm to the Indonesian city of Tual in the Maluku islands Friday after two days of Muslim-Christian violence which killed at least 11 people, police and residents said.

"The situation is calm and under control. There were no more clashes or burning (Friday)," First Sergeant Luki of the Tual district police said.

"It has been calm since last night but it is not yet peaceful. Tension remains and we don't know whether violence will break out again later today," said Master Sergeant Istia, also from the district police.

Istia said around 100 soldiers had arrived from the provincial capital of Ambon early Friday and been immediately deployed around town — mainly in

the old sector of Tual, worst hit by the violence.

He said about 30 police mobile brigade members had also arrived from Ambon on Thursday.

A doctor at the general hospital in Tual said 11 bodies had been brought to the hospital by late Thursday and another 17 were being treated for arrow, gunshot and machete wounds.

The hospital was running low on medical supplies, chief doctor Nona Notanubud told AFP by phone.

"We have asked the government in Ambon to supply medicines and medical personnel from the armed forces. Several migrant doctors want to leave because they don't feel safe," Notanubud said.

Antara news agency said 90 homes and buildings had been set on fire by late

Thursday by rival factions in Tual, where a Christian priest and his son were among the dead.

Molis, a shopkeeper in the city of 65,000 people 540 kilometres southeast of Ambon, said security personnel held talks with religious leaders Thursday night in an effort to stop the bloodshed.

He said he had been told by a soldier that rioters would be shot on sight. The order could not be immediately confirmed.

"Muslims are going to the mosque (for Friday prayers) but I don't know if Christians held (Good Friday) services," he said.

The Zion Protestant church in Tual held no mass Friday while the Catholic church in neighbouring Langgur, only separated by a bridged narrow strait from Tual, celebrated early mass.

More than 200 people have been killed in clashes between Muslims and Christians across the Maluku since mid-January. The unrest has left widespread devastation.

Police said Thursday they had only 42 men in Tual and were outnumbered. Before the arrival of the additional troops, the military had only mustered a company of local troops and about 100 personnel from local air force and navy bases.

The clashes have forced thousands of villagers to flee to military barracks, halls and mosques in search of safety.

Istia said some 2,500 people had sought refuge at the district police station while thousands more were sheltering at other military installations in town, including at the air and navy bases.

'Private money to keep Mir in orbit'

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia's space chief said Friday that several private investors have agreed to keep the ageing Mir space station in orbit after government money for the 13-year-old station runs out this August.

Russian space agency chief Yuri Koptev refused to name any of the investors, but said a Canadian of Russian origin has already donated \$100,000 to finance Mir's operation.

Koptev said some investors had asked that their money pay for scientific experiments aboard the craft, while others will contribute money towards its \$250 million yearly maintenance fees, the ITAR-TASS news agency reported.

Space officials have said Mir could stay in orbit for three more years, but may be discarded as early as this August if no private funds are raised. The cash-strapped gov-

ernment said it can no longer afford to keep Mir aloft.

Meanwhile, a progress cargo ship blasted off for Mir on Friday from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan with fuel, food, medicine and equipment for biological experiments. The ship is expected to dock with Mir on Sunday, the Interfax news agency reported.

The station, which was originally intended to run for only five years, has

been running relatively trouble-free since a string of breakdowns and accidents in 1997, including a fire and a near fatal collision with a cargo ship.

The U.S. space agency NASA has long urged the Russian government to scrap Mir and commit its meager resources to the international space station, a 16-nation project that is a year behind schedule because of Russia's failure to build a key segment on time.

NEWS IN BRIEF

French president visits Mont Blanc tunnel following tragedy

CHAMONIX, France (AP) — French President Jacques Chirac visited the Mont Blanc tunnel on Friday amid a growing controversy over security measures following a fire that killed 40 people. Chirac paid tribute to the rescue workers and the victims of last week's truck fire and said authorities would determine the cause of the disaster. He also called for the development of rail transport, saying that a system allowing trains to carry large trucks would help unlog Europe's roads. "It is not reasonable to have such a high concentration of trucks on roadways and especially in tunnels like we have here," Chirac said. Specifically, he said, France is pushing for the acceleration of a project for a high-speed train linking Lyon with the Italian city of Turin, now planned for 2010. The French government has called for a review of security in all tunnels in France, in particular the Mont Blanc tunnel which links France and Italy. "all the means necessary have been put in place so that the inquiry can be carried out in the most meticulous, scientific and rapid fashion," Chirac said. French police were forced to call off their investigation inside the tunnel Thursday due to a risk that the roof, severely weakened due to the fire, might cave in. A Belgian truck transporting flour and margarine caught fire last Wednesday about halfway through the 11.6 kilometre tunnel. Meanwhile, officials, including the mayor of Chamonix, the alpine resort town located at the foot of the road leading to the tunnel, charged that security was inadequate. French Transport Minister Jean-Claude Gayssot said on Friday that partial findings of the inquiry into the causes of the fire would be ready by April 9.

China ex-minister calls for educational reforms

BEIJING (R) — Wang Meng, fired as culture minister months after China's 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrations, has called for educational reforms, saying students should be encouraged to "use their brains". Wang advocated change to Chinese language and literature courses in elementary and high schools, the Wen Hui daily said in an edition seen on Friday. "No change will not do," Wang was quoted as saying. Students should be allowed to "use their own brains, their own pens and their own words to write essays", Wang said, adding that multiple choice questions in language tests should be banned. Language teachers should encourage students to "write what they feel, be unique in language, independent-minded, imaginative, creative and satirical", Wang added. The 54-year-old novelist was purged during the 1957 anti-rightist campaign which banished almost one million intellectuals to the countryside after Mao Zedong "lured snakes out of their holes" to criticise the Communist Party. Wang was handpicked by reform-minded former Communist Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang to become culture minister in 1986 and adopted a basically hands-off policy towards fellow authors. Hu died on April 15, 1989, sparking student-led demonstrations for democracy that were crushed by the army on June 4 that year with heavy loss of life. Wang has been the target of diatribes in ultra-leftist magazines in recent years.

Austria wants extradition of 'Carlos the Jackal', says lawyer

PARIS (AFP) — Austria has requested the extradition of convicted terrorist Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, better known as "Carlos the Jackal", his lawyer said Friday. Isabelle Coutant-Peyre said Carlos had been notified in jail that Austria wanted to arrest him in connection with a 1975 attack in Vienna against an OPEC meeting. Carlos was sentenced to life imprisonment by a French court in 1997 for the 1975 killing of two police officers and an informer during an attempt to apprehend him in a small Paris apartment. He faces trial in France for other attacks. On Dec. 21, 1975, a commando led by Carlos took 70 OPEC members, including 11 ministers, hostage at a conference in Vienna. Three people were killed, the commando flew to safety and received \$50 million ransom. The attack gave the world its first glimpse of the Carlos, when in dark glasses and a black beret he was seen smiling and shaking hands with the Austrian interior minister on an airport tarmac before flying off to safety. After more than 25 years on the run, he was seized in 1994 by French agents in Sudan.

'Few young men and women among Kosovo refugees'

PARIS (AFP) — Emma Bonino, the European Union's humanitarian affairs commissioner, on Friday said there were few 20 to 40-year-old Kosovar men and women among the floods of refugees who have fled the province. "Eighty per cent of the refugees are women, children and old people," Bonino told France's TV5 television network in an interview from Brussels after a trip to Albania and Macedonia. "Once again, as happened in Srebrenica (in Bosnia) you wonder where the 20 to 40-year-old men and women can be." Recalling that this was not the first time that the Yugoslav authorities had triggered a mass exodus, she said: "In 1994, we had 400,000 refugees in Germany and 800,000 that we helped in Croatia. This is a repetition of events but one that is being far more manipulated to shock European public opinion which tends to forget that there are still a million people inside (Kosovo) about whom we have no news."

Tamil rebels kill 5 Sri Lankan policemen

VAVUNIYA, Sri Lanka (AP) — Tamil Tiger rebels killed five Sri Lankan policemen and wounded four others in an attack on a police post in northern Sri Lanka, police officials said on Friday. The rebels raided the post killing the policemen on the spot, said the officials on condition of anonymity. The government controls Mannar town, 60 kilometres west of Vavuniya, but rebels of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam operate in villages and jungles. Vavuniya, 210 kilometres north of Colombo, also is under government control. The rebels are fighting for an independent homeland for minority 18 per cent of Sri Lanka's 18.5 million people. Sinhalese killed since 1983.

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A picture made available by the United Nations World Food Programme shows stunted children resting at a nursery in Kumchon, in North Korea's Hwanghae province, March 25, 1999. Sixty per cent of the 70 children at the nursery are stunted after four years of famine in the isolated country. United Nations aid officials say the country will run out of food this month, and is desperately in need of relief supplies (AFP photo)

North Korea seen relocating two million people to country

SEOUL (R) — Famine-stricken North Korea is relocating two million people to the countryside to increase the workforce on its battered farms. South Korea's spy agency said on Friday.

Those being relocated were mostly jobless, reprimanded government officials and criminals, it said. The two million people accounted for eight per cent of North Korea's total population, a statement from the National Intelligence Service quoted its head as saying at a regular parliamentary briefing.

The relocation began last year and one million people were being moved from the capital Pyongyang for five years, the others moved from provincial cities until 2001, the statement said.

The agency also said crimes including prostitution, bribery and smuggling were increasing in the famine-stricken North.

There were an increasing number of vagabonds, mainly due to worsening food shortages, it said.

The number of vagabonds was estimated at around 200,000 in all of 1998, up from 13,000 people in

1994, before Pyongyang was faced with food deprivation, it said.

South Korea's intelligence agency did not reveal the source of the information.

The United Nations said on Friday its World Food Programme (WFP) would launch an appeal for \$280 million worth of food aid for North Korea as it faces its annual lean period.

May and June would put "stress" on the population because food from last year's harvest would dry up in the government distribution system by early April

and new planting would only just be under way. David Morton, the U.N. humanitarian coordinator and WFP representative in North Korea, told a news conference in Beijing. North Korea is heavily dependent on international aid to feed its people after floods in 1995, followed by drought and other natural disasters, wreaked havoc on its agricultural system.

Famine and related illnesses have killed up to two million North Koreans since then, according to U.S. congressional estimates.

'Indian opposition trying to destabilise government'

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's ruling Hindu nationalists Friday accused the main opposition party of trying to topple the government, amid signs of growing discontent within the ruling coalition.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's BJP party said the Congress party was "straining itself too hard to destabilise the government in the mistaken belief it will succeed in its misadventure."

The Congress had "thrown all political morality and ethics to the wind to somehow or other destabilise the government," BJP president Kushabhau Thakre told a party meeting in the western state of Goa.

The meeting, attended by the BJP's top brass including Vajpayee and Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani, was to assess the party's performance over the past year and map future strategy, officials said.

The meeting came a day

after the regional AIADMK party, which has 18 members of parliament in Vajpayee's multi-party coalition, threatened to pull out at an hour's notice.

The leader of the fractious ally, Jayalalitha Jayaram, had demanded the dismissal of Defence Minister George Fernandes over the unceremonious sacking of India's naval chief in December.

The prime minister rejected the demand, further straining relations with Jayalalitha — a former movie star who has kept the Hindu nationalists on tenterhooks since Vajpayee took office in March last year.

Jayalalitha threatened Thursday to withdraw her party's crucial support to the government after a cabinet minister denounced her, forcing the prime minister to hurriedly disown the minister's remarks.

N. Bhaskar Rao, director of the independent Centre for

Media Studies, said the BJP meeting in Goa would concentrate on ironing out internal differences, spats within the coalition and the fall-out of Jayalalitha's public flirtation with the Congress.

"They will try to reassert themselves. It is a psychological game because all around things are falling apart," he told AFP.

"Jayalalitha is trying to have both ends ... she is gauging what is best for her," he said, referring to her party's stand that it could pull out from the ruling coalition at short notice.

Jayalalitha is due to meet Indian President K.R. Narayanan on April 11. "Everyone in the BJP will be looking at that with bated breath. That could be a bombshell or an earthquake," said Rao.

Rao described Vajpayee's statement that the government would not fall if one ally withdrew support as

mere bravado.

The government won a parliamentary motion last month by a slender majority. Rao said: "If Jayalalitha leaves with her 18 people, where does that leave (the prime minister)?"

Analysts say other shadows darkening the meeting are an increasing divide between the moderates in the party, led by Vajpayee, and the Hindu hardliners, who look up to Advani.

There is also a deep division within the party on continuing and broadening economic reforms as well as the dismissal of the navy chief.

The BJP's troubles are compounded by the fact that the Congress, led by the Italian-born Sonia Gandhi, appears to be bracing for fresh elections.

Rao said the fate of the BJP-led coalition was at best uncertain. "I do not see them lasting till the year-end," he said.

Kenya's Moi reappoints Saitoti vice president

NAIROBI (R) — Kenya's President Daniel Arap Moi said on Friday he was reappointing as vice president the man he demoted 15 months ago, filling a long vacuum in the post.

George Saitoti served as vice president under Moi for nine years until the last general elections, which Moi won in December 1997, since when the post was left vacant.

Under Kenya's constitution, the 74-year-old Moi, in power since 1978, is due to step down in 2002 after his fifth term as president.

His failure to appoint a vice president had provoked widespread criticism from opposition and business leaders concerned that the vacancy posed

continuity problems.

Moi made the announcement while addressing "a mammoth crowd" in Limuru town, close to the Kenyan capital Nairobi, in an official statement said.

The 55-year old professor Saitoti retains his post at minister for planning and national development.

Saitoti, a former mathematics professor, first served as a nominated member of parliament in 1983, but chose to contest an elected seat in 1988 to show he had support from his Maasai people of Kajiado, in Kenya's Rift Valley province.

He also served as finance minister from 1983 to 1992. Kenya's economy was in

decline and inflation was soaring, while the International Monetary Fund (IMF) halted vital balance of payments support in 1991 to reinforce its protest against mounting corruption and poor governance.

Saitoti was a central figure in the Goldenberg scandal — Kenya's biggest fraud case since independence from Britain in 1963. As finance minister, he sanctioned an export compensation scheme under which businessman Kamlesh Patni allegedly received more than \$100 million for non-existent gold and diamond exports.

Kenya has little gold and no diamonds, and Patni, along with three former

government officials, is facing fraud charges in a Kenyan court.

Saitoti has always strenuously denied any wrongdoing in the case, and says he acted with the full knowledge of the cabinet.

He is close to powerful Cabinet Minister Nicholas Biwott, who has remained Moi's closest adviser since he came to power in 1978. Saitoti is a wealthy businessman, owning several flower and vegetable farms, and holding directorships in a host of companies.

He was born of parents from Kenya's populous Kikuyu tribe, but is a naturalised Maasai, having lived in Maasailand as a boy.

Former Zambian president escapes assassination attempt

LUSAKA, Zambia (AP) —

Former President Kenneth Kaunda escaped assassination when gunmen fired on his car outside his home in Lusaka, the Zambian capital.

Kaunda, 75, was still inside his home when three gunmen opened fire and riddled the car with bullets Thursday night when it arrived outside the house in Lusaka's exclusive Kabulonga suburb.

"It is clear they wanted me. Why shoot where I usually sit?" Kaunda told reporters Friday.

He said he would make no further comment as he was fasting and mourning the recent death of his sister.

Edward Chanda, one of Kaunda's bodyguards, said he saw three

assailants following Kaunda's Land cruiser in a white Toyota minibus.

As Kaunda's vehicle approached the gate of his home, one man jumped out of the minibus, drawing an assault rifle from under his coat. Chanda said.

"I saw the gun and shouted at my friends in the car that the man was armed. So everyone went under the seats," Chanda said.

The attackers opened fire and three shots hit the front of the vehicle.

One bodyguard, Solam Zimba, was seated where Kaunda normally rides and he "jumped out and the bullets passed through the opened door," Chanda said.

The attackers sped away

and police were looking for the minibus.

None of the three men in Kaunda's vehicle were hurt. The attack occurred about 8:15 p.m. (1815 GMT).

Kaunda's son, Wezi Kaunda, accused the government of President Frederick Chiluba of staging the attack to eliminate the veteran politician and call early elections.

"The government is certainly involved," said the younger Kaunda.

But Bernard Mayona, a senior assistant police commissioner, said police do not yet know the motive, the South African Press Association reported.

The former president, who led the country to independence in 1964 and

ruled for 27 years, was slightly wounded in another attack in August 1997. His son contended there still has been no investigation into that attack.

Thursday's attack came on the day that Kaunda appealed to the supreme court in an effort to overturn a lower court ruling that stripped him of his Zambian citizenship.

The court ruled Wednesday that Kaunda never properly renounced his Malawian nationality and therefore was not a Zambian citizen.

Kaunda, born to Malawian immigrants in northeastern Zambia, retains his rights to Zambian residence until the supreme court rules on the appeal, said Kaunda's attorney, Patrick Mvunga.

Missing N. Korean crewmen may have been trapped

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — The 37 missing North Korean seamen whose cement-laden freighter collided with a South Korean vessel may have been trapped inside their ship when it sank, officials said Friday.

The two survivors — an electrician and a member of the cleaning staff — who were picked up by the South Korean vessel were on duty on the freighter's bridge, said S. Sigamany, the chief officer of the Colombo radio, which relays distress calls and coordinates port-related services.

"We spoke to the South Korean ship and they say except the two, they are not aware of any other survivors," Sigamany told the Associated Press.

"Given the time of the mishap, it is most likely that most of the crewmen were

either in their cabins, with a few in the engine room," said Sigamany. "Maybe, I say maybe, this is the reason why we do not have any word on the fate of missing crewmen."

The accident was the first collision of ships from the two hostile Korean countries in international waters. The Koreans were divided into the Communist North and the capitalist South in 1945. They are technically still at war as their 1950-53 conflict ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty.

Shipping agents in Colombo for the North Korean ship said they believed the missing crew were all North Koreans.

The two North Korean crewmen were rescued Thursday by the South Korean vessel following the accident late Wednesday night.

They were identified as Pak Yong Ho and Hwang Kyung Ho.

The crash took place 560 kilometres off the southern port city of Galle, Sri Lanka, said Colombo radio.

In Seoul, South Korea, the Hyundai shipping company said its 61,150-tonne container ship, The Duke, collided with the Manpoho, a 7,000-tonne cement carrier from North Korea, roughly between Sri Lanka and Sumatra, Indonesia.

Hyundai officials said the South Korean vessel had left the scene of the collision for Colombo, the Sri Lankan capital, after failing to find the 37 missing crewmen. The South Korean vessel, described as far better equipped than the outdated North Korean one, was on its way to Europe with electronics and other export items when the accident occurred.

It was not immediately clear what caused the collision or whether the South Korean vessel had suffered any damage.

Sri Lankan rescue tug boats resumed searching the area for any survivors Friday morning. A Panama-registered vessel "Pacific Master" which is in the area also has joined in the search.

"Two Indian ships are also joining soon in the search in hope that the missing crewmen are located," Sigamany said.

A search and rescue coordinating centre also was set up on Thursday in Vishakapattanam, a port city in neighbouring India. Indian helicopters were also put into service.

At least one Indian ship also was in the vicinity when the accident occurred in the major shipping lane off Sri Lanka.

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Ritter's recommendation

FORMER U.N. weapons inspector in Iraq Scott Ritter is no friend of Iraq, and when he told the London-based Arabic newspaper Al-Hayat last week that Iraq has already been disarmed and no longer poses a threat to its neighbours, he should be taken seriously. The ex-U.S. marine knows what he is talking about when it comes to Baghdad's military capabilities in nuclear, chemical and biological warfare because he was a key member of the U.N. weapons inspection team operating in Iraq for several years. "Today," said Ritter on Tuesday, "Iraq no longer possesses arms of mass destruction." "Where are the biological arms factories? They have been destroyed." "Where are the chemical weapons factories? They have been destroyed," added Ritter.

True the former inspector also said that Baghdad still has the know-how to develop nuclear weapons, but which country these days does not? At a time when Iraq's nuclear programme and its means of delivery have been destroyed and dismantled, there are no justifications left for the continuation of the economic sanctions being imposed on the Arab country by the U.N. Security Council. A system of long-term monitoring of Iraq's weapons programme rather than inspections is what Ritter is recommending in future dealing with Baghdad. This makes sense against the backdrop of the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

If the West is still entertaining anxieties about Iraq and its regime, the idea of imposing a long-term monitoring system is a much more effective way of keeping tabs on the country than keeping its people deprived, not only of the basic necessities but also opportunities for economic development and progress. It is high time to open a new chapter on Iraq and allow it to regain its place in the international community.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Faneh made a comparison between the performance of both the Jordan Electricity Company (JEC) and Jordan Telecommunications Company (JTC). On the 22nd of every month, a JEC employee comes to read the meter and after one week another one comes to deliver the bill and take the money, said Faneh. The JTC issued its last bill for the December period. This means that there are JD45 million in outstanding payments, said Faneh, which will result in a JD5 million annual loss. The JTC should be faster than the JEC in getting payments, each call being registered automatically, said the writer, so why, he asked, is the JEC more efficient in this respect? The reason is obvious: the JEC is a private company while the JTC is government-owned and there are big differences between the two when it comes to the quality of services and achievements, because of the bureaucratic nature of the public sector. Changing the name from foundation to company did not do anything, and the firm is still unable to publish an annual phone book although all numbers have been changed, Faneh said.

Al Ra'i's Taher Adwan said the coming municipal elections are important not only because they are democratic practice, but because a municipal council is directly responsible for developing municipal areas and defending residents rights. In developed countries, Adwan added, a municipal council is the reference to organise all services and projects within the municipality including hospitals, police, etc. Unfortunately, most of Jordan's municipalities and villages have for a long time been unorganised, which has prevented people from enjoying many vital services, according to Adwan. The writer said most of the committees and councils appointed by the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment were not responsible enough to capably organise municipalities especially in the 60s and 70s. Most of the areas of the Jordanian countryside suffer from serious environmental problems caused by pollution and insufficient technological projects. Adwan said he hopes that the coming elections will witness awareness of support for the organisation and development of these areas and the fight against pollution.

A chance for Arafat to prove his mettle

PALESTINIAN LEADER Yasser Arafat has been subjected to a loud crescendo of voices warning against his avowed intention to declare an independent Palestinian state on May 4, the deadline for negotiations on technical details and implementation of accords reached under the broad framework of the Oslo agreements of 1993. Arafat has been sending mixed signals about his disposition and inclination to heed such voices. But one thing is clear: Arafat will be wasting an excellent diplomatic and political opportunity if he simply abandons the idea to declare statehood without securing unequivocal American and European endorsement of the Palestinian right to do so on a specific date. The Palestinians have already compromised heavily and made painful sacrifices to reach this point in the Middle East peace process, and it

would be nothing short of signing away Palestinian rights once and for all if Arafat simply folds his intended declaration and waits for the Israelis to be good and ready to resume negotiations. Indeed, such a declaration without a clear definition of the borders of the Palestinian entity — not to mention a definite hardening of the Israeli position, including a total collapse of the peace process — carries a host of dangerous political repercussions. But, with signs emerging that Arafat is most likely to put off the move, the focus is on what he could get out of a postponement. Reports from Europe indicate that the European Union (EU), with the active support of the United States, is drafting a statement endorsing the Palestinian right to independent statehood in return for Arafat delaying his declaration.

If those reports are true, then Arafat is indeed proving that he has learnt much from his experience with the tough negotiating tactics of the Israelis. And, assuming that the idea of such an EU statement came from Arafat, we in Jordan are particularly elated that the Palestinian president is showing his people and the rest of the Arabs that the descriptions applied to his negotiating style are no longer valid. In his meeting with Arafat, U.S. President Bill Clinton is reported to have reaffirmed his determination to protect and advance the peace process. That pledge should be seen against the backdrop of the humiliation that Clinton suffered at the hands of the Republican-led camp which sought to oust him from the White House in the Monica Lewinsky affair. The bulk of the Republican-led

Jordanian Perspective



Dr. Musa Keilani

leadership is heavily pro-Israeli, and it is not beyond imagination to expect Clinton to try to get back at them by bringing pressure to bear upon Israel in the peace process: much more so, given that Clinton does not have any preoccupation

with re-election. Although it looks otherwise, that is good news for the Arabs and the Palestinians. In that vein, the American stand that Israeli-Palestinian negotiations could go beyond the May 4 deadline is also welcome to the Arabs and the Palestinians. But that has to be coupled with a definite American undertaking that the negotiations would be on technicalities and not on concept, being of course Palestinian statehood. There are a million ifs and buts in the process, including the possibility that Benjamin Netanyahu might win re-election as prime minister in the May 17 general elections in Israel. If anything, an Arafat declaration of Palestinian statehood would only support Netanyahu's headline slogan among Israeli voters against accepting the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.



Sinai breaks and Balkan bloodshed

Textbook Vacationing

WE WENT to the Sinai in Egypt last week for a few days' relaxation, a motley group composed of an American (your humble narrator), a Briton, and a colleague with dual British/Jordanian nationality. Boldly, we set out in high spirits for Dahab, that oasis of sin on the Red Sea, with a plan that included no plans at all but to forget what was going on in the rest of the world for a while. Our route and means of transport to Egypt seemed simple and straightforward: from Amman to Aqaba via service taxi, then on to Nuweiba with the ferry, and from there to Dahab, again by service. So foolproof was our plan that we calculated we would reach our destination well before the evening set in, beating a friendly rival group (all continental Europeans) taking a different route. Alas, my readers and friends, this is where the weedy part of the story begins. As the crow flies, the ship sails, or the service drives, we should have been in Dahab in time to watch the sun set over a few cold, albeit Egyptian, beers. But in our idealistic visions of a hassle-free journey, we overlooked one small item: we were travelling in the Middle East, a region where the simplest thing becomes a herculean task and most countries' idea of vacationing is survival of the fittest. From the outset, we were plagued by the poor driving skills of taxi operators, especially in the proximity of sharp curves on cliffs, the extreme inefficiency of the Aqaba Port Authority, rip-off artists, thieves, and, probably the most damning factor, lessons in better tourism.

Yes, it's true. These valuable lessons, in the end, did us in, making an already costly trip that much more expensive and adding a unwanted day onto our "vacation." Our dual nationality colleague, "OK" (not his real name), made the grave mistake of travelling on his Jordanian passport. Upon reaching Nuweiba port, the Anglo-American team made it out with no problems while "OK" was herded along with other Arabs travelling on the ship and subjected to a little Egyptian hospitality, i.e., treated like a criminal and sent to the security department for over two hours. While some other Arab citizens made it out of the port with little or no trouble (a group of drunken young Jordanian elites; wealthy Gulf residents), OK was abused by a petty port official for stepping over an invisible line in the sand apparently designed to keep the derelicts (passengers) at bay, among other infractions.

I must say, it baffled and angered me at first. An Egyptian port official abusing a Jordanian visiting one of Egypt's prime tourist areas didn't seem to make much sense within the framework of the ideals of the Arab Nation. But then I started analysing the situation and, I believe, drew the appropriate conclusion. It was all for OK's own benefit, a bit of the tough love, "kiss-my-butt-and-cull-it-ice-cream" treatment, sure to make an otherwise dull run of the mill vacation really stand out and to encourage further visits to Egypt. And besides, you never really can sure who you can trust, can you?

The rest of the trip confirmed my new, penetrating observation. Taxi drivers dumping passengers in the middle of the desert if they refuse to pay outrageous sums — a lesson in negotiation and business Arabic. Clerks selling tickets for a desperately needed ship that they know isn't sailing due to high winds — a study in maritime affairs, emergency budget management and fluid time perception. Visa problems preventing travel through Israel without weeks of preparation — a demonstration of the intricacies and benefits of a peace treaty. Theft of treasured, irreplaceable cassette tapes — a mini-course in expanding musical tastes and property protection.

Yes, I must hand it to the Egyptians — they have a textbook tourism industry. I heartily recommend that everyone take a vacation to Egypt, which will be even more enjoyable if you are a fluent Arabic speaker and tough negotiator or an extremely wealthy individual who enjoys abuse.

Setting the clock forward

NATO CONTINUES its bombing campaign in Yugoslavia, ostensibly in order to protect ethnic Albanian citizens from Serbian actions which reportedly include ethnic cleansing, rape, and indiscriminate killings. This has drawn loud and vigorous protests from several countries, notably Russia, China and India, who oppose military intervention against a sovereign country without a mandate from the U.N. A number of issues have been raised by this episode, including the involved parties' grasp of history, circumstances under which it is permissible to "violate" a country's "sovereignty," the value of military force in settling disputes, and the emerging political landscape as the world (hopefully) enters the 21st century.

Several comments by leading politicians on the Yugoslavia situation have been difficult to comprehend or contradictory. Take, for instance, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's optimistic assessment that the NATO strikes, in the same region that set off WWI, shouldn't harm U.S.-Russia relations. President Clinton now seems to be heading towards going back on both the pledges that ground forces would not be introduced and that Kosovo would not be split off from Yugoslavia. Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, who presided over the death of 2,000 Palestinians at a refugee camp in Lebanon in 1982, has issued a statement that he is opposed to the killing of innocent civilians. More ominous is the talk by Russian military officers of deploying nuclear weapons in the event that Russia's "security" is threatened. It makes one wonder where the Yugoslavia bombing is heading, or more to the point, for what reasons it began.

Since, however, the air strikes have begun, their value, if any, in ending the bloodshed should be taken into consideration. So far, there are many more, not fewer, refugees fleeing in terror, villages burning and people being killed. It is also difficult to see how can Cruise missiles and rockets stop mass

Out of Order



Brian Brown

killings. It doesn't take much to murder a large number of people at one time, as one commentator pointed out — few guns did the job at Racak, where 45 Kosovan civilians were executed. If NATO's aim was to protect innocent civilians with air strikes alone, the alliance made a tragic miscalculation.

Finally, the most important issue raised by the NATO-Yugoslavia affair: the inviolability of a country's sovereignty. Specifically, the questions focus on the circumstances under which foreign intervention into an independent state's affairs is permissible and what party or parties should be entrusted to intervene. Many of the countries opposing the NATO action fear that it will set a precedent of support for separatist movements that may affect them: China with Tibet, Russia with Chechnya, India with Kashmir. Another concern is the bypassing of the U.N. by NATO, which many see as simply another cover for the U.S. that allows it to further its own interests and aims, thus in effect making the U.S. a sort of world policeman.

However, if the testimonies of thousands of Kosovo refugees can be believed, there is an ongoing campaign to displace or force them from their homes, at the very least. Adding to the problem are the memories of the 1991-1995 Balkan conflict, in which documented atrocities were carried out. The issue then, on humanitarian grounds, is not whether to intervene but how. In this respect, NATO and the U.N. both fall short of the mark. monolithic remnants, in their current state, of the Cold War, incapable of dealing with new developments in a world without the Soviet Union. Intervention is needed in Yugoslavia, but it seems that NATO is not the best vehicle for doing so.

RECOMMENDED READING: *The Shadow over Innsmouth*, by H.P. Lovecraft. The narrator of this novella makes a visit to an ancient, secluded town in New England as part of a tour to find out more about his family roots. There he makes a horrible discovery that almost costs him his life and in the end costs him his soul. Though Lovecraft wrote in the 1920s and 30s, his brand of horror, in which no one escapes, still has a gripping quality among contemporary audiences.

War without casualties

By Gwynne Dyer

IT IS grotesque and somehow shameful to try to wage war without suffering any casualties at all. It is also very stupid.

Some airman among the NATO forces bombarding Yugoslavia may have died by the time you read this, but as I write, after a week of bombing, the Western alliance's political leaders and senior commanders have succeeded in their aim of "punishing" Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic without sacrificing a single NATO serviceman's life. What they have on their hands, however, is not a success. It is a strategic and humanitarian disaster.

If you do not instantly see why NATO's policy of using air power without ground troops is so craven and repellent, I cannot easily persuade you, for these are emotional and moral judgements. But the stupidity of the policy was obvious before the first bomb dropped, it is manifest now in the horrors befalling the innocent population of Kosovo, and it will grow ever clearer until the alliance is forced, not many days from now, to commit ground troops.

The only reason that NATO's casualties will probably not grow into the thousands is that the Serb army is not very good at fighting. Armies that loot and massacre rarely are.

In all the wars in which Milosevic has destroyed the old Yugoslavia, his army has never fought without massive superiority in weapons, and even then it has had limited success against determined opposition. Fighting against well-trained, professional troops and under constant air attacks, it is likely to start breaking up quite soon. Which is just as well, because there are not going to be a lot of those professional NATO troops for quite a while.

The only NATO troops near Kosovo are the 12,000 in Macedonia — which, like Kosovo, is a landlocked country that is quite hard to get to.

The only good port and road connections into Macedonia run through Greece, which is not likely to make them available because it is secretly sympathetic to Serbia.

You can also get to Kosovo directly through Albania and Montenegro, but the roads through Albania to Kosovo are not good. Even if Montenegro does secede from Yugoslavia in the next few weeks, it will not want to risk igniting a civil war by opening its territory to troops at war with Serbia.

So the only way to get NATO troops into Kosovo quickly is to send in the ones already in Macedonia, lightly equipped as they are, and follow them up with reinforcements who also get to Macedonia by air.

This is obviously an unsatisfactory way of doing things, though combined with NATO air power it will probably work against low-grade military opponents like the Serbs. But how could the NATO comman-

dery have been so stupid as to get into this situation? Why didn't NATO stuff Macedonia full of troops and heavy weapons during the months when it was trying to bluff the Serbs into stopping the ethnic cleansing of Macedonia? Then at least it would have had an adequate intervention force at hand if air strikes didn't terrify Milosevic into submission, and the "massacre time" that the Kosovars have long predicted came to pass. As it has.

The NATO countries didn't take this basic precaution — the sort of thing you'd be thrown off the Staff College course for neglecting to do — because they didn't want to rouse opposition at home by putting any more ground troops anywhere near Kosovo. They were busy swearing to their respective publics that no NATO infantryman would ever fight in the Balkans, and symbolism won out over strategy.

So why are they now going to commit ground troops anyway? Because if they don't, Milosevic wins. Two million Kosovars become refugees, destabilising all the surrounding countries. Kosovo itself becomes a desert to be repopulated eventually, perhaps, by Serbs, and NATO celebrates its 50th anniversary later this month as a fresh corpse.

If the alliance dares not commit its ground troops even in this low-risk situation, to stop a horrendous genocide that is happening almost before its eyes, then precisely what would it use them for? Why would anyone trust NATO to defend them? So NATO will go in on the ground — and the soldiers will not mind, though they have every right to despise the politicised generals and cowardly politicians who have made their job so much more difficult. They understand, at the practical level, that if their government never dares to commit them to combat under any circumstances, eventually the public will ask why it has to pay for them at all.

They also understand, at a more profound level, that this demeaning and ludicrously impracticable notion of a war without casualties (on our side) robs them of their dignity. Whatever the justice of the cause, the business of the military is killing and destruction, and there is no honour in that: just squalor and horror.

What gives the soldier moral stature is not his proficiency at killing, but his willingness, if need be, to sacrifice his own life. Of course a good soldier will always try to keep casualties down, above all on his own side, but also on the other side if that is compatible with attaining the objective. But to BAN casualties, to build strategy around a policy of no casualties at all, is to reduce soldiers to the level of mere technicians of killing. They deserve better than that.

So do the desperate people of Kosovo.

The writer is a London-based independent journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries.

The current bombings: Behind the rhetoric

By Noam Chomsky



The writer is a Professor of Linguistics at the University of Cambridge, Massachusetts

THERE HAVE been many inquiries concerning NATO (meaning primarily U.S.) bombing in connection with Kosovo. A great deal has been written about the topic, and I'd like to make a few general observations, keeping to facts that are not seriously contested.

There are two fundamental issues: (1) What are the accepted and applicable "rules of world order"? (2) How do these or other considerations apply in the case of Kosovo?

(1) There is a regime of international law and international order, binding on all states, based on the U.N. Charter and subsequent resolutions and World Court decisions. In brief, the threat or use of force is banned unless explicitly authorized by the Security Council after it has determined that peaceful means have failed, or in self-defence against "armed attack" (a narrow concept) until the Security Council acts.

There is, of course, more to say. Thus there is at least a tension, if not an outright contradiction, between the rules of world order laid down in the U.N. Charter and the rights articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), a second pillar of the world order established under U.S. initiative after World War II. The Charter bans force violating state sovereignty; the UD guarantees the rights of individuals against oppressive states. The issue of "humanitarian intervention" arises from this tension. It is the right of "humanitarian intervention" that is claimed by the U.S./NATO in Kosovo, and that is generally supported by editorial opinion and news reports (in the latter case, reflexively, even by the very choice of terminology).

The question is addressed in a news report in the NY Times (March 27), headlined "Legal Scholars Support Case for Using Force" in Kosovo (March 27). One example is offered: Allen Gerson, former counsel to the U.S. mission to the UN. Two other legal scholars are cited. One, Ted Galen Carpenter, "scolded at the Administration argument" and dismissed the alleged right of intervention. The third is Jack Goldsmith, a specialist on international law at Chicago Law school. He says that critics of the NATO bombing "have a pretty good legal argument," but "many people think [an exception for humanitarian intervention] does exist as a matter of custom and practice." That summarizes the evidence offered to justify the favoured conclusion stated in the headline.

Goldsmith's observation is reasonable, at least if we agree that facts are relevant to the determination of "custom and practice." We may also bear in mind a truism: the right of humanitarian intervention, if it exists, is premised on the "good faith" of those intervening, and that assumption is based not on their rhetoric but on their record, in particular their record of adherence to the principles of international law, World Court decisions, and so on. That is indeed a truism, at least with regard to others. Consider, for example, Iranian offers to intervene in Bosnia to prevent massacres at a time when the West would not do so. These were dismissed with ridicule (in fact, ignored): if there was a reason beyond subordination to power, it was because Iranian "good faith" could not be assumed. A rational person then asks obvious questions: is the Iranian record of intervention and terror worse than that of the U.S.? And other questions, for example: How should we assess the "good faith" of the only

country to have vetoed a Security Council resolution calling on all states to obey international law? What about its historical record? Unless such questions are prominent on the agenda of discourse, an honest person will dismiss it as mere allegiance to doctrine. A useful exercise is to determine how much of the literature — media or other — survives such elementary conditions as these.

(2) There has been a humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo in the past year, overwhelmingly attributable to Yugoslav military forces. The main victims have been ethnic Albanian Kosovars, some

'Despite the desperate efforts of ideologues to prove that circles are square, there is no serious doubt that the NATO bombings further undermine what remains of the fragile structure of international law'

90 per cent of the population of this Yugoslav territory. The standard estimate is 2000 deaths and hundreds of thousands of refugees.

In such cases, outsiders have three choices:

(I) try to escalate the catastrophe

(II) try to mitigate the catastrophe

The choices are illustrated by other contemporary cases. Let's keep to a few of approximately the same scale, and ask where Kosovo fits into the pattern.

(A) Colombia. In Colombia, according to State Department estimates, the annual level of political killing by the government and its paramilitary associates is about at the level of Kosovo, and refugee flight primarily from their atrocities is well over a million. Colombia has been the leading Western hemisphere recipient of U.S. arms and training as violence increased through

the '90s, and that assistance is now increasing, under a "drug war" pretext dismissed by almost all serious observers. The Clinton administration was particularly enthusiastic in its praise for President Gaviria, whose tenure in office was responsible for "appalling levels of violence," according to human rights organisations, even surpassing his predecessors. Details are readily available.

In this case, the U.S. reaction is (I): escalate the atrocities.

(B) Turkey. By very conservative estimates, Turkish repression of Kurds in the '90s falls in the category of Kosovo. It peaked in the early '90s; one index is the flight of over a million Kurds from the countryside to the unofficial Kurdish capital Diyarbakir from 1990 to 1994, as the Turkish army was devastating the countryside. 1994 marked two records: it was "the year of the worst repression in the Kurdish provinces" of Turkey, Jonathan Randal reported from the scene, and the year when Turkey became "the biggest single importer of American military hardware and thus the world's largest arms purchaser." When human rights groups exposed Turkey's use of U.S. jets to bomb villages, the Clinton administration found ways to evade laws requiring suspension of arms deliveries, much as it was doing in Indonesia and elsewhere.

Colombia and Turkey explain their (U.S.-supported) atrocities on grounds that they are defending their countries from the threat of terrorist guerrillas. As does the government of Yugoslavia.

Again, the example illustrates (I): try to escalate the atrocities.

(C) Laos. Every year thousands of people, mostly children and poor farmers, are killed in the Plain of Jars in Northern Laos, the scene of the heaviest bombing of civilian targets in history it appears, and arguably the most cruel: Washington's furious assault on a poor peasant society had little to do with its wars in the region. The worst period was from 1968, when Washington was compelled to undertake negotiations (under popular and business pressure), ending the regular bombardment of North Vietnam. Kissinger-Nixon then decided to shift the planes to bombardment of Laos and Cambodia.

The deaths are from "bombies," tiny anti-personnel weapons, far worse than land-mines: they are designed specifically to kill and maim, and have no effect on trucks, buildings, etc. The Plain was saturated with hundreds of millions of these criminal devices, which have a failure-to-explode rate of 20-30 per cent according to the manufacturer, Honeywell. The numbers suggest either remarkably poor quality control or a rational policy of murdering civilians by delayed action. These were only a fraction of the technology deployed, including advanced missiles to penetrate caves where families sought shelter. Current annual casualties from "bombies" are estimated from hundreds a year to "an annual nationwide casualty rate of 20,000," more than half of them deaths, according to the veteran Asia reporter Barry Wain of the Wall Street Journal — in its Asia edition. A conservative estimate, then, is that the crisis this year is approximately comparable to Kosovo, though deaths are far more highly concentrated among children — over half, according to analyses reported by the Menominee Central Committee, which has been working there since 1977 to alleviate the continuing atrocities.

There have been efforts to publicise and deal with the humanitarian catastrophe. A British-based Mine Advisory Group (MAG) is trying to remove the lethal objects, but the U.S. is conspicuously missing from the handful of Western organisations that have followed MAG. The British press reports, though it has finally agreed to train some Laotian civilians. The British press also reports, with some anger, the allegation of MAG specialists that the U.S. refuses to provide them with "render harmless procedures" that would make their work "a lot quicker and a lot safer." These remain a state secret, as does the whole affair in the United States. The Bangkok press reports a very similar situation in Cambodia, particularly the Eastern region where U.S. bombardment from early 1969 was most intense.

In this case, the U.S. reaction is (II): do nothing. And the reaction of the media and commentators is to keep silent, following the norms under which the war against Laos was designated a "secret war" — meaning well-known, but suppressed, as also in the case of Cambodia from March 1969. The level of self-censorship was

od. In that period, perhaps the most compelling example of (II) is the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in December 1978, terminating Pol Pot's atrocities, which were then peaking. Vietnam pleaded the right of self-defence against armed attack, one of the few post-Charter examples when the plea is plausible: the Khmer Rouge regime (Democratic Kampuchea, DK) was carrying out murderous attacks against Vietnam in border areas. The U.S. reaction is instructive. The press condemned the "Prussians" of Asia for their outrageous violation of international law. They were harshly punished for the crime of having terminated Pol Pot's slaughters, first by a (U.S.-backed) Chinese invasion, then by U.S. imposition of extremely harsh sanctions. The U.S. recognised the expelled DK as the official government of Cambodia, because of its "continuity" with the Pol Pot regime, the State Department explained. Not too subtly, the U.S. supported the Khmer Rouge in its continuing attacks in Cambodia.

The example tells us more about the "custom and practice" that underlies "the emerging legal

understanding. And of course the same is true of the destruction of half the pharmaceutical production of a small African country a few months earlier, an event that also does not indicate that the "moral compass" is straying from righteousness — not to speak of a record that would be prominently reviewed right now if facts were considered relevant to determining "custom and practice."

It could be argued, rather plausibly, that further demolition of the rules of world order is irrelevant, just as it had lost its meaning by the late 1930s. The contempt of the world's leading power for the framework of world order has become so extreme that there is nothing left to discuss. A review of the internal documentary record demonstrates that the stance traces back to the earliest days, even to the first memorandum of the newly-formed National Security Council in 1947. During the Kennedy years, the stance began to gain overt expression. The main innovation of the Reagan-Clinton years is that defiance of international law and the Charter has become entirely open. It has also been backed with interesting explanations, which would be on the front pages, and prominent in the school and university curriculum, if truth and honesty were considered significant values. The highest authorities explained with brutal clarity that the World Court, the U.N., and other agencies had become irrelevant because they no longer follow U.S. orders, as they did in the early post-war years.

One might then adopt the official position. That would be an honest stand, at least if it were accompanied by refusal to play the cynical game of self-righteous posturing and wielding of the despised principles of international law as a highly selective weapon against shifting enemies.

While the Reaganites broke new ground, under Clinton the defiance of world order has become so extreme as to be of concern even to hawkish policy analysts. In the current issue of the leading establishment journal, Foreign Affairs, Samuel Huntington warns that Washington is treading a dangerous course. In the eyes of much of the world — probably most of the world, he suggests — the U.S. is "becoming the rogue superpower," considered "the single greatest external threat to their societies." Realist "international relations theory," he argues, predicts that coalitions may arise to counterbalance the rogue superpower. On pragmatic grounds, then, the stance should be reconsidered. Americans who prefer a different image of their society might call for a reconsideration on other than pragmatic grounds.

Where does that leave the question of what to do in Kosovo? It leaves it unanswered. The U.S. has chosen a course of action which, as it explicitly recognises, escalates atrocities and violence — "predictably," a course of action that also strikes yet another blow against the regime of international order, which does offer the weak at least some limited protection from predatory states. As for the longer term, consequences are unpredictable. One plausible observation is that "every bomb that falls on Serbia and every ethnic killing in Kosovo suggests that it will scarcely be possible for Serbs and Albanians to live beside each other in some sort of peace" (Financial Times, March 27). Some of the longer term possible outcomes are extremely ugly, as has not gone without notice.

A standard argument is that we had to do something; we could not simply stand by as atrocities continue. That is never true. One choice, always, is to follow the Hippocratic principle: "First, do no harm." If you can think of no way to adhere to that elementary principle, then do nothing. There are always ways that can be considered. Diplomacy and negotiations are never at an end.

The right of "humanitarian intervention" is likely to be more frequently invoked in coming years — maybe with justification, maybe not — now that Cold War pretences have lost their efficacy. In such an era, it may be worthwhile to pay attention to the views of highly respected commentators — not to speak of the World Court, which explicitly ruled on this matter in a decision rejected by the United States, its essentials not even reported.

In the scholarly disciplines of international affairs and international law it would be hard to find more respected voices than Hedley Bull or Louis Henkin. Bull warned 15 years ago that "particular states or groups of states that set themselves up as the authoritative judges of the world common good, in disregard of the views of others, are in fact a menace to international order, and thus to effective action in this field." Henkin, in a standard work on world order, writes that the "pressures eroding the prohibition on the use of force are deplorable, and the arguments to legitimise the use of force in those circumstances are unpersuasive and dangerous... Violations of human rights are indeed all too common, and if it were permissible to remedy them by external use of force, there would be no law to forbid the use of force by almost any state against almost any other. Human rights, I believe, will have to be vindicated, and other injustices remedied, by other, peaceful means, not by opening the door to aggression and destroying the principle advance in international law, the outlawing of war and the prohibition of force."

Recognised principles of international law and world order, solemn treaty obligations, decisions by the World Court, considered pronouncements by the most respected commentators — these do not automatically solve particular problems. Each issue has to be considered on its merits. For those who do not adopt the standards of Saddam Hussein, there is a heavy burden of proof to meet in undertaking the threat or use of force in violation of the principles of international order. Perhaps the burden can be met, but that has to be shown, not merely proclaimed with passionate rhetoric. The consequences of such violations have to be assessed carefully — in particular, what we understand to be "predictable." And for those who are minimally serious, the reasons for the actions also have to be assessed — again, not simply by adulation of our leaders and their "moral compass."

— Z Magazine



Two Kosovar refugees fleeing their homes. The U.S.-NATO bombings against Serbia have been called a humanitarian intervention, but arguably transgress international laws and U.N. conventions. This raises the question of whether the U.S. is becoming a 'rogue' superpower, and whether 'the contempt of the world's leading power for the framework of world order has become so extreme' that it is, in fact, a menace to international order (AFP photo)

extraordinary then, as is the current phase. The relevance of this shocking example should be obvious without further comment.

I will skip other examples of (I) and (II), which abound, and also much more serious contemporary atrocities, such as the huge slaughter of Iraqi civilians by means of a particularly vicious form of biological warfare — "a very hard choice," Madeleine Albright commented on national TV in 1996 when asked for her reaction to the killing of half a million Iraqi children in 5 years, but "we think the price is worth it." Current estimates remain about 5,000 children killed a month, and the price is still "worth it." These and other examples might also be kept in mind when we read news rhetoric about how the "moral compass" of the Clinton administration is at last functioning properly, as the Kosovo example illustrates.

Just what does the example illustrate? The threat of NATO bombing, predictably, led to a sharp escalation of atrocities by the Serbian army and paramilitaries, and to the departure of international observers, which of course had the same effect. Commanding General Wesley Clark declared that it was "entirely predictable" that Serbian terror and violence would intensify after the NATO bombing, exactly as happened. The terror for the first time reached the capital city of Pristina, and there are credible reports of large-scale destruction of villages, assassinations, generation of an enormous refugee flow, perhaps an effort to expel a good part of the Albanian population — all an "entirely predictable" consequence of the threat and then the use of force, as General Clark rightly observes.

Kosovo is therefore another illustration of (I): try to escalate the violence, with exactly that expectation.

To find examples illustrating (II) is all too easy, at least if we keep to official rhetoric. The major recent academic study of "humanitarian intervention," by Sean Murphy, reviews the record after the Kellogg-Briand pact of 1928 which outlawed war, and then since the U.N. Charter, which strengthened and articulated these provisions. In the first phase, he writes, the most prominent examples of "humanitarian intervention" were Japan's attack on Manchuria, Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia, and Hitler's occupation of parts of Czechoslovakia. All were accompanied by highly uplifting humanitarian rhetoric, and factual justifications as well. Japan was going to establish an "earthly paradise" as it defended Manchurians from "Chinese bandits," with the support of a leading Chinese nationalist, a far more credible figure than anyone the U.S. was able to conjure up during its attack on South Vietnam. Mussolini was liberating thousands of slaves as he carried forth the Western "civilising mission." Hitler announced Germany's intention to end ethnic tensions and violence, and "safeguard the national individuality of the German and Czech peoples," in an operation "filled with earnest desire to serve the true interests of the peoples dwelling in the area." In accordance with their will, the Slovakian president asked Hitler to declare Slovakia a protectorate.

Another useful intellectual exercise is to compare those obscure justifications with those offered for interventions, including "humanitarian interventions," in the post-U.N. Charter period.

norms of humanitarian intervention."

Despite the desperate efforts of ideologues to prove that circles are square, there is no serious doubt that the NATO bombings further undermine what remains of the fragile structure of international law. The U.S. made that entirely clear in the discussions leading to the NATO decision. Apart from the U.K. (by now, about as much of an independent actor as the Ukraine was

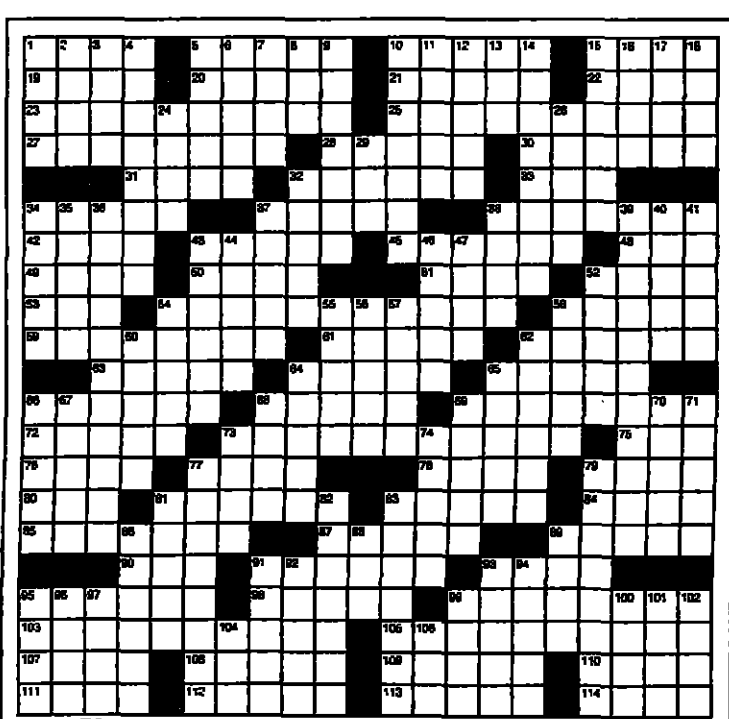
'A standard argument is that we had to do something: we could not simply stand by as atrocities continue. That is never true. One choice, always, is to follow the Hippocratic principle: 'First, do no harm.' If you can think of no way to adhere to that elementary principle, then do nothing'

in the pre-Gorbachev years), NATO countries were sceptical of U.S. policy, and were particularly annoyed by Secretary of State Albright's "sabra-ranting" (Kevin Cullen, Boston Globe, Feb. 22). Today, the more closely one approaches the conflicted region, the greater the opposition to Washington's insistence on force, even within NATO (Greece and Italy). France had called for a U.N. Security Council resolution to authorise deployment of NATO peacekeepers. The U.S. flatly refused, insisting on "its stand that NATO should be able to act independently of the United Nations." State Department officials explained. The U.S. refused to permit the "neologism word 'authorise'" to appear in the final NATO statement, unwilling to concede any authority to the U.N. Charter and international law; only the word "endorse" was permitted (Jane Perlez, NYT, Feb. 11). Similarly the bombing of Iraq was a brazen expression of contempt for the U.N., even the specific timing, and was so

The Saturday Crossword

FOUR LETTERS IN COMMON
By Harvey Chew, Danvers, Massachusetts

- ACROSS**
- Menu entrée
 - Move in a sudden
 - Swamp
 - Dull pains
 - Twaddle
 - Jacob's brother
 - Prattles or Abdul
 - Losing streak
 - Capital of Norway
 - Measure up
 - Nina, to Phia
 - Rear gates
 - Knit of fibers
 - Horn of Ostoria
 - Fast time
 - Power
 - X - VII
 - Aspect
 - Job duration
 - Del offerings
 - Gulfian industrial region
 - Preliminary work
 - Stable units
 - Cool down
 - Pindar's output
 - Cloimed
 - Creative work
 - Gob's comment
 - Constantine's birthplace
 - Star of the Silence of the Lambs
 - Input data
 - Faxed
 - Make fit
 - Gambler's pledges
 - Collier
 - Lyttelton Strachey's first name
 - Older companion?
 - Knee-jerk connections
 - Bottled spirit?
 - Getaway driver
 - Staminal and Mae
 - White shade
 - Newcastle brown or grey
 - Pal of B.A.
 - Stronghold
 - Challenging
 - Eye amorously
 - Shrimp's tormentor
 - Conical residences
 - Noggin
 - Simulata
 - Encroachment
 - Mine cars
 - Donatus and Auman
 - Ventura, Pot Detective
- DOWN**
- Adds protective layers
 - Christmas decoration
 - Helan of 'City Slickers'
 - Shoulder warmer
 - Awe-inspiring
 - Village evaluator
 - Author of 'The Virginian'
 - States
 - Angerically
 - Church congregation
 - Awaken
 - Latin & others
 - Cathedral benches
 - Categorizes
 - Passover meal
 - Fleeting
 - Star of 'Edward Scissorhands'
 - Gaffer Acid
 - Up
 - Silver-tongued
 - Rare
 - Rejoiced delightedly
 - 'The Men Who ...'
 - There
 - Irving albat
 - Butting cheer
 - White root food
 - States positively
 - Reel separation
 - Impudent girl
 - Ambulance worker, abet
 - TV one-dots
 - Harzogovina
 - Workplace injury
 - grip
 - Inadvertent error
 - Dream
 - Encounter
 - Pool-table sides
 - Downing Street address
 - Practice piece of music
 - Palm leaf
 - Wier-haro turned actor Murphy
 - Karpov or Kasparov, e.g.
 - Serious
 - Pronounce indistinctly
 - Neatly-dressed character
 - Chiller
 - Chicago lower
 - Ten baseballs
 - Senior
 - Lugs



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- Mimic
- Female monsters
- Silent, in music
- 'The Ball of ...'
- Living rooms
- Grudge-B westons
- Drive a dinghy
- Actress Gann
- Out of bed
- Seniors' Butler
- On edge
- More untasted
- Exchange
- Breath
- Freshly
- Intemperate current
- Up, Doc?
- Eight
- Repost
- Perry's pennar
- Portuguese saint
- Mistake

Business
Daily
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Chicago." The capital boom that has

profits were "another
a maturing expansion.

around 3.2 per cent in the first quarter that ended Wednesday.

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1957	12312	12312	12312
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1959	12312	12312	12312

57.55	5.2524	5.7524	5.7524
32.75	3.8745	3.8745	3.8745
55.32	5.5526	5.5526	5.5526
17.67	2.6376	2.6376	2.6376

2555	2555	2555	2555
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JORDAN DINAR

BAR	2700	2700
ON STERLING	1140	1140
TY MARK	01897	2137
LAND FRANC	2476	2400

	ASK	BID
200 40	280 40	278 90
5 00	5 00	4 95
163 00	163 00	161 00

WORLD STOCK MARKETS					PRECIOUS METALS		
STOCK MARKET	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST CLOSE	CHANGE			
FRANKFURT	DAX	4284.20	4256.94	27.36	METAL	ASK	BID
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	10842.20	10840.21	1.99	GOLD	225.40	232.20
LONDON	FT-SE 100	6295.30	6284.10	31.20	SILVER	5.00	5.20
NEW YORK	DJ INDU.	9896.15	9812.26	72.90	PLATINUM	382.00	364.00
NEW YORK	NYSE COMPOSITE	602.59	608.56	-4.97			
NEW YORK	AMEX COMPOSITE	710.59	711.63	-1.03			
NEW YORK	S&P 500	1236.37	1230.75	-14.28			
TOKYO	NIKKEI-225	16327.56	15836.59	+490.97			
PARIS	CAC 40	4197.88	4141.88	55.90			

Yesterday's Jumbles: TOKEN CLEFT (Answers tomorrow)
 Answer: What the visitors heard at the BURGLAR MYRIAD

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Petra Tourist Transport Company reports small profit after several losses

****AFTER RECORDING JD451,000 in accumulated losses, Petra Tourist Transport Company, registered a JD56,500 net profit in 1998. Board Chairman Mohammed Bilbeisi told the shareholders at an ordinary meeting of the general assembly that the company generated JD1.9 million in total earnings in 1998 compared to JD1.4 million in 1997 as the overall operational rate contracted to 53.6 per cent last year compared to the 57.8 per cent contraction during 1997.**

Bilbeisi stressed that the Unified Ticketing Office agreement, signed with the Jordan Express Tourist Transport Company and Alfa Company, put an end to the negative price war between the three companies. "The agreement positively reflected on the performance of the three firms and was the main reason behind achieving the previous results despite the decline in operational rates and an 18 per cent drop in the number of tourists," the chairman said.

He outlined the company's financial position saying that total assets had declined from JD7.4 million in 1997 to JD6.7 million in 1998 and that the total current liabilities went down from JD1 million to JD568,000 at the end of last year. Net shareholders equity edged up slightly from JD5.4 million to close 1998 at JD5.5 million.

The chairman highlighted that the company was able to slash bank interest and expenses to JD167,000 from JD229,000 during 1997 and to reduce

administrative and general expenses from JD151,000 to JD126,000.

As for future plans, Bilbeisi said the company had bought a seven-dunum area in Aqaba to construct a bus station, a project which will save the firm accommodation, parking and washing costs. He also promised that the company will continue to improve its high-quality services. In this regard, he indicated that the three companies took part in transporting around 45,000 pilgrims to perform the Haj and Umra in Saudi Arabia. "By providing the services at the highest level of organisation, accuracy and comfort the three transport companies won the trust and confidence of the Islamic institutions in Jordan and Palestine," he emphasised.

Meanwhile, Bilbeisi said that though tourism is an important element of national income and a source for hard currency, the political ups and downs in the region cast a shadow on the growth in terms of the number of tourists in particular and the economic situation in general.

Concluding its ordinary meeting, the general assembly elected a new board of directors after a strong competition which actually reflected heated contention in the tourism transportation market. In this context, it should be noted that efforts to merge Petra and JETT company did not succeed.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, APRIL 3, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Looks like you're still trying to figure out who goes where, when and why. The money is part of the problem. You can't afford to do everything you want to do, so you're going to have to make a choice. Pick the option that works best for the weakest member of your team.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You and your partner don't really see eye to eye, and that's rather sad. You might feel like breaking up completely, but that's not a good idea, and might not even be possible. Looks like you're stuck together, so make the best of it. Compromise.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Your travel plans may be thwarted today, but don't worry. All's well that ends well, and it looks like that's what happens. Work you get stuck doing instead could very favourably impress an older person, and that could lead to more money in your pocket. So don't complain.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) You're lucky in love today, with travel and with communications. So, how about a long road trip with the person you love best? It's a great way to talk out whatever's on your mind, while watching the beautiful scenery go by. Don't be afraid. Go as far as you can.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) The day starts out with a little bit of tension. There's lots to do at home, but lots of fun to have somewhere else. How are you going to manage to do it all? Well, you might have to ask a friend to help, but it can be done.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) You're still moving full speed ahead, but take care. There are a couple of places where you could get into trouble. Although you want to hurry, you're best advised to be cautious. You don't want to trip over anything while you're travelling at this rate of speed.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You could have a bit of confusion on a date today. Looks like you've got one thing in mind, but your friend wants to do something else. Maybe you could split up for a while and meet again later. That's unusual, but not impossible, and might actually work well for you both.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Don't get your nose all out of joint today if someone else gets loud and brassy. You don't like to be pushed around, that's for sure, but you can be nice about it, even regal. You have more power than you realise, so use it wisely.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Communication is the key to your success today, as always. Today it might be a little more difficult, but that's OK. You are likely to broach a subject you didn't really want to talk about, or somebody else doesn't want to talk about. Be patient and encourage the truth to come out.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) The emphasis is to go for something you've never done before is even stronger today than it was yesterday, but that's all right. The odds are greater today that you'll be successful. And besides, you probably understand the situation better now than you did then. Go for it!

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) There's a conflict of interest going on today. Somebody's interested in having you do something. Somebody else wants you to stay home. It's as if everybody wants a little bit of your time and attention, even (so it seems) to be more willing to work out a compromise.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) It'll be hard to stay fenced in today. You want to get out for a run, and well you should. But take care. It looks like an obstacle course. That doesn't mean you shouldn't go, it just means you need to pay attention to what you're doing. In fact, if you do that, and trust your instincts, you might even win this race.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

Wait-and-see attitude prevails at ASE

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Share prices and turnover were low at the Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) during a two-day trading last week following the week-long holiday of 'Eid Al Adha.

Naim Nageeb, a broker at the stock market, said investors were reluctant to buy or sell shares and took a "wait-and-see" attitude.

"It was the end of a week

and the end of a month. And many investors did not have the appetite to be involved in the market," Nageeb told the Jordan Times.

The weekly stock exchange's bulletin showed that turnover amounted to JD1.2 million compared to JD6.2 million in the previous week while the general price index closed at 180.32 points compared to 182.71, or drop of 2.39 points.

Nageeb attributed the fall in

the price index to the decline in the share price of the Arab Bank, the stock market's major blue-chip, following the bank's decision to distribute JD2.6 million as dividends to the shareholders.

"Moreover, the number of firms whose shares were traded was not that much and prices of many of the shares declined," the broker added.

Despite lower share prices, Arab Bank ranked first among the 49 firms whose

shares were traded on the exchange floor during last week.

With a total turnover amounting to JD478,975 the bank's share price closed at JD215, JD5 less than the previous week.

The industrial sector won half of the turnover as trading focused on shares of Jordan Phosphate Mines Company and the International Tobacco Company.

The bulletin showed that

shares of 14 firms recorded an increase in their prices, 20 registering decrease while 15 other companies witnessed no change in their share prices.

The bulletin showed that the parallel market's turnover amounted to JD200,664 where trading focused on the Mideast Pharmaceutical and Al Ekbali Printing companies, where turnover amounted to JD92,187.

A.E.S. TRADE Thursday, 01-04-99 ACCESS 4646868

Company	Open	Close	Change
BANKS			
ARAB BK	214,000	215,000	+0.47%
NTL BK	1,420	1,420	0.00%
INDUST. EAST BK	0,880	0,880	-2.11%
INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK	1,460	1,390	-4.79%
THE HOUSING BK	2,880	2,880	-1.04%
JO. KUWAIT BK	1,580	1,600	+2.56%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1,680	1,680	0.00%
BETT ELMAL	0,590	0,590	0.00%
BANKS INDEX	281,200	POINT =	+0.19%
SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1,650	1,650	0.00%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0,990	0,990	0.00%
AL-RAT	7,180	7,350	+2.80%
UNION LAND DEV	0,570	0,580	+1.75%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1,050	1,040	-0.95%
SERVICES INDEX	111,990	POINT =	+0.28%
INDUSTRY			
CEMENT	3,660	3,620	-1.04%
PHOSPHATE	2,380	2,350	-1.27%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	11,000	10,900	-0.91%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	3,100	3,050	-1.61%
CERAMIC IND	1,220	1,210	-0.82%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1,580	1,530	-3.16%
JO. PIPES	1,030	0,980	-4.85%
NTL STEEL	0,750	0,780	+4.00%
RAPIA	0,610	0,480	-21.31%
DAR AL DAWA	6,100	6,100	0.00%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0,680	0,580	-14.71%
JO. STEEL	1,010	1,010	0.00%
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1,700	1,700	0.00%
CHLORINE	1,180	1,200	+1.69%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0,400	0,390	-2.50%
PETRO - CHEMICAL	0,230	0,220	-4.35%
CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE OIL	1,150	1,140	-0.87%
ROCKWOOL	0,280	0,270	-3.57%
NTL CABLE	0,540	0,540	0.00%
SULPHO - CHEMICALS	0,390	0,400	+2.56%
KANTHER	0,680	0,580	-14.71%
FOOD FACTORIES	0,950	1,000	+5.26%
IND. RESOURCES	0,480	0,490	+2.08%
NTL ALUMINIUM	0,830	0,810	-2.41%
INDUSTRY INDEX	96,950	POINT =	-0.80%
PARALLEL			
EXPORT BK 75%	0,940	0,940	0.00%
JO. TRADING FACILITIES	0,440	0,440	0.00%
JO. INTL INS	0,680	0,720	+5.88%
UNION INVS. CORP	0,780	0,770	-1.28%
ARAB FINANCIAL INVS	0,500	0,510	+2.00%
AL - EKBAL	0,890	0,890	0.00%
ADVANCED PHAR	0,610	0,620	+1.64%
MEDICAL APPLIANCES	0,440	0,430	-2.27%
AL DAWLAT	0,700	0,670	-4.29%
ARAB INVESTORS	1,110	1,110	0.00%
ARAB INTL TRADE	0,180	0,180	0.00%
RAMCO	0,180	0,170	-5.56%
MIDDLE EAST PHAR	0,620	0,610	-1.61%
UNION TOBACCO	4,250	4,280	+0.72%
AL-RAT	0,570	0,580	+1.75%
UNIFIED ENG. IND	0,220	0,210	-4.55%
NUTRI DAR	0,770	0,800	+3.90%
GRAND INDEX	180,32	POINT =	-0.07%

Lebanese ex-ministers face probe over budget irregularities

BEIRUT (AFP) — The former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri could face charges over "irregularities" in budget spending, a government source has said.

Hariri, as finance minister, another former finance minister Fuad Saniora, and two former ministers of municipal affairs, Hagop Demerdian and Bassem Sabeh figure in a critical 157-page report issued by the Independent Auditing

Commission.

The commission found that more than \$500 million which should have gone to the municipalities' budget had been mispent.

The government noted the existence of irregularities and of certain actions that could be subject to legal procedures, and decided to submit the matter to the courts. Minister of Information Anwar Al Khalil said after the cabinet

examined the report Wednesday.

Khalil also said the government had asked the auditors to examine contracts drawn up in the last three years by seven parastatal organisations headed by close associates of Hariri.

The oil minister in Hariri's government, Shafe Barsoumian, has been held in custody since March 4 on charges of embezzlement and corruption.

BP Amoco buys U.S. ARCO to create the world's biggest private oil producer

LONDON (AFP) — BP Amoco, the world's third-biggest oil company, said Thursday that it planned to buy Atlantic Richfield (ARCO), the seventh-biggest U.S. oil company, for \$26.8 billion (25 billion euros).

The agreed purchase will create the world's largest private oil producer in output terms. The combined market capitalisation will be \$190 billion.

BP Amoco chief executive Sir John Browne said the merger would secure annual savings of about \$1 billion by the year 2001.

The deal would come at a one-off cost of \$1 billion and 2,000 jobs.

It will give BP Amoco an important retail network in the western United States, control of ARCO's plentiful gas reserves in Asia and will allow the companies to jointly exploit plentiful reserves in Alaska.

Browne said that the companies provided "a compelling strategic and geographic fit of quality assets."

The huge buyout comes against a move to consolidate the world's biggest oil companies in the face of low crude oil prices.

BP of Britain and Amoco of the United States only finalised their own tie-up on Dec. 31.

The merger has underpinned the company's share price even though oil prices had languished below \$12 until a fortnight ago.

Browne said in a joint statement with ARCO Chairman Mike Bowlin:

"Against the background of uncertain oil prices and the increased competitive pressure across the sector, it is clear that the uniquely complementary operations of our companies can compete more effectively together than apart to deliver our respective shareholders a superior return on their investment."

BP Amoco said that it would finance the deal entirely in shares.

The company would exchange 0.82 BP Amoco American Depositary Shares for each ARCO share. At BP Amoco's closing price on March 26, this valued ARCO at \$26.8 billion.

The exchange has already been approved by the boards of both companies and must now be passed by shareholders and regulators in Europe and the United States. The companies expect completion by the end of this year.

BP Amoco said that it expected to save \$710 million from merged exploration and production businesses. This includes a saving of \$200 million from a streamlining of operations in Alaska.

The company expects to save \$110 million from refining and marketing and \$180 million from corporate costs.

Browne said: "In Alaska in particular, the synergies

we can achieve from combining our operations will greatly increase the competitiveness of the state in the face of uncertain oil prices and provide a strong incentive for significant investment in existing and future fields."

He expected a "quantum leap in Asian gas production", largely from ARCO's slice of Tangguh gas field in Indonesia, plus reserves in the South China Sea, Malaysia and Thailand.

The buy-out, said Browne, "would allow 'growth in Asia, where we will now have world-class gas reserves ready to supply Japan, Korea and other key markets when recovery comes to the region, which it undoubtedly will."

The new group will remain in third place in terms of turnover, behind the U.S. Exxon, which is to merge with Mobil, and the Anglo-Dutch Royal Dutch/Shell. The new BP market capitalisation will place it in second place behind Exxon-Mobil.

It will control total crude reserves of 12 billion barrels and natural gas reserves of more than 33,000 billion cubic feet. The company will control 20 per cent of U.S. oil reserves.

Analysts said the group would achieve real economies of scale.

"It is a bold step to make a bet of this scale," said Emmanuel Weyd, an energy analyst at JP Morgan Bank.

World rubber body calls for financial backing

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP)

The International Natural Rubber Organisation (INRO) called Thursday for financial backing from exporting countries to enable the organisation to function.

INRO's failure to intervene in the markets to stabilise rubber prices, which sank to a 30-year low, was hampered by a lack of funds, said its deputy executive director Gerard Loven.

"Delay in payment of contributions hampered buying that was massive enough and timely to have a significant impact on the prices, and then exacerbated by the lack of funds," Loven told AFP.

The Kuala Lumpur-based group of exporters and importers uses a buffer stock mechanism to buy and sell rubber to stabilise prices.

Loven said INRO had not purchased rubber in the market after its last intervention on Feb. 24 this year.

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Miami Heat forward Clarence Weatherspoon (behind L) and Philadelphia 76ers forward Theo Ratliff (behind R) watch 76er guard Larry Hughes (L) foul Heat guard Tim Hardaway during first period action of their game at the Miami Arena in Miami, Florida (AFP photo)

Raptors upset Pacers

TORONTO (R) — Rookie Vince Carter scored his team's final six points and had a tip-in with 18 seconds to go as the Toronto Raptors moved two games over .500 for the first time in franchise history with an 88-87 victory over the Indiana Pacers on Thursday.

Named NBA Rookie of the Month for March earlier in the day, Carter scored 14 of Toronto's 19 fourth-quarter points. On the game-winner, he followed his own miss after getting a hand on the miss of a shot by teammate Charles Oakley.

"Down the stretch, coach told me to do what I do best," said Carter. "He has shown a lot of faith in me and believes what I can do as a player. This one goes down as my biggest memory in the pros as it comes against a team that a lot of people think can win the title."

Carter finished with 31 points, 11 rebounds and six assists for the Raptors, who extended their franchise-record home winning streak to seven games.

The win moved Toronto to 16-14 and also marked the first time in team history the Raptors beat Indiana, ending a 13-game losing streak to the Pacers. In its fourth season in the NBA, Toronto has defeated every NBA team at least once.

"This game was like a playoff game, and each game we've been playing seems to have more intensity than the last one," said Raptors swingman Doug Christie.

"Toronto is a different team than the team we played in February — there's no comparison," said Raptors forward Chris Mullin. "Toronto is probably playing the best ball in the league right now."

At Detroit, Grant Hill had 18 points and 11 assists as

the Pistons posted their sixth straight victory and embarrassed the Chicago Bulls for the second time this season, 107-75.

The win, combined with Indiana's loss to Toronto, pulled the Pistons (20-12) within one-half game of the Pacers for the top spot in the Central Division.

At Utah, John Stockton to Karl Malone proved too much for Hakeem Olajuwon. Charles Barkley and Scottie Pippen again.

Stockton fed Malone for an 18-footer with 2.7 seconds to play as the Jazz rallied from a 15-point deficit in the fourth quarter to end the Houston Rockets' nine-game winning streak, 88-87.

Malone was limited to 16 points but came through in the clutch thanks in part to Stockton, who had 11 points and 12 assists to help the Jazz, the two-time defending Western Conference champions, move one game in front of Houston atop the Midwest Division.

In San Antonio, on the day he was named the NBA's Player of the Month for March, Tim Duncan exploded for a career-high 39 points, gave San Antonio the lead for good with a three-point play in the third quarter and ignited a game-clinching 6-0 run as the Spurs beat the Vancouver Grizzlies 103-91.

His frontcourt mate David Robinson was sidelined with a left knee problem.

In Denver, Chauncey Billups scored a career-high 32 points and backup mate Nick Van Exel netted a season-high 31 as the nuggets held on to beat the Seattle SuperSonics 113-110.

Denver, which had dropped 14 of its last 17 games, improved to 2-1 against Seattle this season.

Dale Ellis missed a potential tying 3-pointer at the

buzzer for Seattle, which got 33 points, 11 assists and just two turnovers from Gary Payton.

In Miami, Man Geiger scored 13 of his season-high 25 points in the fourth quarter as the Philadelphia 76ers snapped a nine-game losing streak to the Heat with an 88-84 victory, giving coach Larry Brown his 900th career win.

Allen Iverson, who leads the NBA in scoring at 28.4 points per game, scored 24 but it was Geiger who carried Philadelphia down the stretch.

At New Jersey, the Nets' Stephon Marbury scored 11 of his 27 points in the fourth quarter but also was part of a collision that resulted in a broken leg for teammate Jayson Williams in a 90-85 victory over the Atlanta Hawks.

The injury to Williams, likely ending his season, came in the same game that saw the return of leading scorer Keith Van Horn, who had 24 points and nine rebounds after missing the last two games with a sprained right ankle.

In New York, point guards Chris Childs and Charlie Ward combined for 14 of the Knicks' final 18 points and their team held on for a 78-74 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers, who missed two wide-open jumpers in the final six seconds.

Shawn Kemp netted 25 points for Cleveland, which blew a 13-point lead and scored just 15 points in the fourth quarter.

In Dallas, Michael Finley scored eight of his 22 points in a 3-45 span in the fourth quarter as the Mavericks pulled away for a 93-84 victory over the NBA-worst Los Angeles Clippers.

We have easiest title run-in — Chelsea boss

LONDON (AFP) — Chelsea chairman Ken Bates warned Manchester United and Arsenal on Friday that the Blues have the easiest run-in of the three leading English Premiership title contenders.

In his Easter address to fans, Bates outlined his confidence that the European Cup Winners' Cup holders would see off the challenge of Real Mallorca in their forthcoming semi-final to meet Italians Lazio in the final.

With the belief that they were on course to claim a Champions' League spot at the very least in the Premiership, he set manager Gianluca Vialli a Millennium target.

Bates, who took over at Stamford Bridge in 1982, insisted: "We've got an easier run-in than the other three clubs and have Leeds to come here next month so if we beat them we'll kill them off and definitely be in the Champions' League."

"All the signs are that this is going to be the most successful season at the club since I've been here."

"I know we won two cups last season but hopefully we will win the Cup Winners' Cup again and also get into the Champions' League despite all the horrendous injuries we've had, which we don't tend to talk about the way other clubs do."

"It's really important that we go into the Millennium as one of the top clubs in Europe. Then of course the challenge is to stay there."

Chelsea are seven points behind leaders United and three behind Arsenal with a game in hand but Bates added: "Manchester United have got injuries and they've also got a very heavy fixture schedule."



Australian swimmer Grant Hackett in action during the heats of the mens 400 metres freestyle on the second day of the CTS World Swimming Championships at the Hong Kong Coliseum. Hackett qualified fastest with a new championship record of 3:40.76 (AFP photo)

Hackett smashes 400m freestyle record

HONG KONG (AFP) — Australia's Grant Hackett smashed the 400 metre freestyle record at the World Short Course Championships here Friday, shaving a massive four seconds off the old mark to win gold in 3:35.01.

Hackett obliterated compatriot and friend Ian Thorpe's existing mark of 3:39.82 set in Perth last September.

Thorpe also beat his old record, trailing in second in 3:35.64 in an electric final at the Hong Kong Coliseum.

Earlier, Japan's Masami Tanaka broke the world record in the women's 200 metre breaststroke here with a time of 2:20.22 to bag her second gold of the meet.

Tanaka, the Asian Games gold medalist, shaved nearly half a second off Samantha Riley's four-year-old time of 2:20.85 set in Rio de Janeiro in 1995, beating two-time Olympic cham-



Australian swimmer Ian Thorpe (R) smiles with compatriot and great rival Michael Klim as he learns he has broken the 200-metre freestyle world record in the final at the world short course swimming championships at the Hong Kong Coliseum. Thorpe beat the previous record of 1 minute 43.64 with a time of 1 minute 43.28 (AFP photo)

pion Penny Heyns into second place. Tanaka clinched victory breaststroke here in the women's 50m Thursday.

Professional Opportunities Information Systems Division/Applications and Technical Sections Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company Ltd.

A major project is under implementation at the Information Systems Division, ISD, of Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company, JPR. The project involves integrated business applications running on two IBM AS/400e servers. The company is seeking highly qualified, experienced and motivated professionals to fill the following vacancies in the Applications and Technical sections of ISD.

Assistant Director/Applications

To work closely with ISD Director, Assistant Director/Technical, manage and lead the application group in the implementation and support of an Enterprise Resource Planning, ERP, system. Qualifications include:

- BS/MS degree in Computer Science or related fields
- Good knowledge of financials, sales order processing, purchasing, and/or inventory systems. Knowledge of plant/equipment maintenance systems is a plus.
- Experience in software development and implementation, system analysis, 3 & 4 GL languages, client/server applications, and project management.
- Self-motivated and have good communication and interpersonal skills.

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To work closely with ISD Director, Assistant Director/Applications, manage and lead the technical group in the implementation, support, and operation of the IT infrastructure in JPR. Qualifications include:

- BS/MS degree in Computer/Electrical engineering
- Good knowledge of midrange and client/server platforms
- Experience in installation and maintenance of system software, RDBMS, application software, networking, and project management.
- Self-motivated and have good communication and interpersonal skills.

To apply, candidates should fill relevant forms available from the Personnel Department, Jabal Amman, First Circle, Mutanabee Street, P.O. Box 1079, Amman 11118. Please attach a complete up-to-date resume of work experience and qualifications. Last date to apply is April 15, 1999. All applications will be handled confidentially.

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Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Jordan beats Qatar 75-70

AMMAN — The Kingdom's men's basketball team beat its Qatari counterpart 75-70 in a friendly match in Doha which comes as part of both teams' preparations for regional events. Qatar had won the first of a series of matches 79-71. A third match is scheduled before the team returns home Sunday. The Kingdom's team last week had a training camp in Beirut, Lebanon, where they won three matches and lost another three. Following the team's results in Beirut, the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) decided to dismiss the Bulgarian coach and appointed Murad Barakat to take charge. Informed sources said the JBF was contacting a U.S. coach to supervise and prepare the team for the 9th Pan-Arab Games which will be held in Amman this summer.

Handball, basketball teams to play in Egypt

AMMAN — The national handball team for women will hold a training camp in Cairo and Alexandria at the end of this month as part of preparations for the Pan-Arab Games — Al Hussein Tournament. During the camp, the team, which is being trained by Iraqi coach Qutaibah Ahmad, will play a number of friendlies against Cairo's Al Ahli and the Under-18 Zamalek team, as well as against Alexandria's Samouha and Sporting teams. Meanwhile, the Jordan Basketball Federation is currently contacting its Egyptian counterpart to hold a training camp in Egypt for the national women's team, which is also preparing for the Arab Games.

Fencing tourney to be held next week

AMMAN — The Jordan Fencing Federation will host the teams of Lebanon, Tunisia and Iraq on Saturday to hold a small-scale championship in the epee and sabre events. Last week, the national team started training intensively and will hold an 8-day training camp in Iraq at the end of this month where they will play a number of friendlies against their Iraqi counterparts.

Sports Palace closes for maintenance

AMMAN — Maintenance at the Sports Palace at Al Hussein Youth City will start this week in preparation for the Pan-Arab Games. Five teams from three federations — volleyball, handball and basketball utilise the palace for their training.

Oman to take part in 3 events only

AMMAN — Oman's Olympic Committee has decided to participate in soccer, athletics and shooting at the Pan-Arab Games. The Al Hussein Tournament will have 26 out of 62 Olympic Games on its Aug. 15-31 schedule of events.

Shadian dominates RACJ Speed Test

AMMAN (J.T.) — Khateeb Shadian won the second Speed Test of the year when he maintained best time in Friday's three rounds of the event organised by the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ).

Shadian clocked 1:55.64 in his Renault 5 GT Turbo leading the 24 participants with Mohammad Ma'ani coming second with 1:56.62 and Othman Nashashibi third with 1:59.11.

Shadian's elder brother, Barkev, was fourth followed by Khaled Al Sai'i, Tareq Taba'a and Ahmad Daoud.

With Friday's win, Shadian maintained his lead atop the Speed Test championship after winning the season's inaugural Speed Test on March 19 in which 27 participants took part.

Pantani unlikely to defend Tour de France title

PARIS (AFP) — Italy's Tour de France champion Marco Pantani has announced that he is unlikely to defend his title in the 1999 race.

The 29-year-old said that following a fall at the Tour of Murcia in Spain earlier this month he wants to concentrate his efforts on defending his Tour of Italy title. In 1998 Pantani won both the Italian and French Tours.

He added that he will participate in the Tour of Spain from September 4-26 to get in form for the world championships at Verona, in northern Italy in early October. Nicknamed "Il Pirata" because of his shaved head, earring and colourful bandanas, Pantani is one of the best climbers in the world.

W. Asian Basketball Championship Iranian team's withdrawal leaves only 3 teams confirmed

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The 2nd West Asian Basketball Championship hosted by Al Orthodoxy Club, lost another contender when Iran's Baykan declined participation over the weekend.

Last week, title favourites, Lebanese champions Al Hikma, also pulled out of the April 12-17 event leaving only three teams confirmed: Iraq's Air Force Club, the Palestinian Authority national team, and hosts Jordanian champions Al Orthodoxy Club.

According to Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) officials, talks are still under-way to secure the participation of Yemen's Al Mina' and Syrian champions Al Wihdeh, now Al Orthodoxy's sole arch-rival in the

six-day tournament where the winning team will qualify to play in the Asian Clubs Championship in May.

Al Hikma, Arab champions for the last two years with professional players on their line-up, cited injuries on their lineup and preferred to stay away from the competition having automatically qualified to the Asian Clubs Championship as hosts of the finals in Beirut.

Al Orthodoxy and Al Ahli both previously took part in the Asian Clubs Championship with Al Ahli securing the best Jordanian showing with a fourth place finish in 1995.

The Asian Clubs Championship will include 10 titleholding Asian teams: the top four from the last championship, one each from the ABC's five zones and the host

nation.

The International Basketball Federation, FIBA, has approved for the champion club of Asia to participate in the McDonalds Championship which will be held in Italy later this year.

The McDonalds Championship, a high level tourney, groups the world's top teams including the NBA champion, two teams from Europe, one team from South America and the best team from Oceania. From now on, the Asian champion will now take part in the annual event biennially.

The West Asian Championship was initiated with the formation of Asian Basketball Confederation's (ABC) West Asia Zone last year and three championships have been held so far. The women's and the U-18

youth's tournaments and the 1st West Asian Championship in which five teams took part.

Al Riyadi of Lebanon won the title playing against Al Mina', Al Wihdeh, Iran's Zobohan and Jordan's former champions Al Jazireh who were hosts.

The JBF had initially suggested enabling national team players to join the Al Orthodoxy's lineup as part of preparations for this summer's Pan-Arab Games. It was not yet clear how that set-up would be arranged.

The national team recently concluded a training camp in Lebanon and is currently in Qatar where they will play three matches.

Hingis advances but Seles falters at Hilton Head

HILTON HEAD (AFP) — Top seed Martina Hingis got off to a slow start but picked up the pace to post a 7-5, 6-1 victory over Conchita Martinez Thursday in the third round of the Family Circle Cup.

Seeking her first title in two months, Hingis fell behind the 10th-seeded Spaniard, 2-4, in the first set before winning 11 of the next 13 games.

"I played terrible in the beginning," Hingis said. "I was not really into it and I got myself down. But I kind of picked up my game, especially in the second set. I started making more winners. I was making some shots I would miss before and it was a big change."

Defending champion and fifth seed Amanda Coetzer of South Africa couldn't get her game going, falling 6-2, 6-3 to Hingis.

Last year, Coetzer won the biggest title of her career here and became the lowest seed, at No. 4, to win the event. Second-seeded Monica Seles followed Coetzer out of the tournament, falling to Russian Elena Likhovtseva 7-6 (7/4), 6-2.

They got a late start on their night showcase match after rain interrupted the last day match between third-seeded Czech Jana Novotna and Italian Silvia Farina.

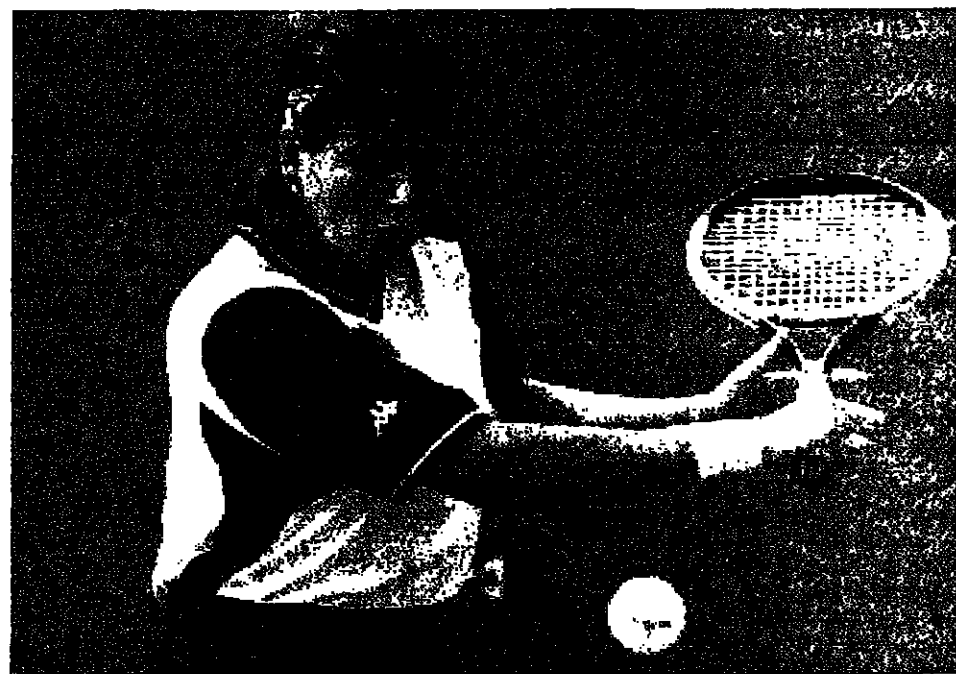
Novotna shrugged off the disruption, quickly winning the two games she needed to complete a 5-7, 7-5, 6-3 victory over Farina.

Hingis improved to 7-2 lifetime against Martinez, earning her first win on clay over the Spaniard in three tries.

Making her first appearance at Hilton Head since earning the title here in 1997, the 18-year-old Hingis has not claimed a title since defeating Coetzer in the Pan Pacific Open in Japan on February 7. She also won her third straight Australian Open singles title in January.

Hingis will take on Natasha Zvereva of Belarus in Friday's quarterfinals. Zvereva dispatched Nathalie Dechy of France, 6-3, 7-6 (7/4).

In other third-round play, sixth seed Patty Schnyder of Switzerland downed Iva Majoli of Croatia, 7-6 (7/2), 6-3, seventh-seeded Russian teenager Anna Kournikova got past Barbara Schett of



Conchita Martinez

Austria 7-6 (8/6), 6-4, and defeated Spain's Gala Leon Kournikova and Glass will meet in the quarterfinals. Germany's Andrea Glass Garcia, 6-4, 6-3.

SCOREBOARD

Davis Cup

World Group
• Sweden 0 Slovakia 1
Karol Kucera (Svk) bt Thomas Johansson (Swe) 6-1, 7-6 (9/7), 2-6, 6-3

• Zimbabwe 1 Australia 0
Byron Black (Zim) bt Mark Philippoussis (Aus) 6-3, 3-6, 4-6, 6-3, 7-5

• France 0 Netherlands 1
Richard Krajicek (Ned) bt Jerome Golmard (Fra) 3-6, 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-4, 6-2

Asia-Oceania Zone Group One
• New Zealand 1 South Korea 1
Hyung-Taik Lee (Kor) bt Mark Nielsen (Nzi) 7-5, 6-0, 6-4

Brett Steven (Nzl) bt Hyeong-Keun Song (Kor) 6-3, 6-4, 6-4

• Japan 1 Uzbekistan 1
Takao Suzuki (Jpn) bt Vadim Kutsenko (Uzb) 6-3, 6-4, 7-5

Oleg Ogorodov (Uzb) bt Goichi Motomura (Jpn) 2-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-2, 6-7 (6/8), 3-0, retired

• India 2 China 0
Leander Paes (Ind) bt Zhang Yu (Chn) 6-4, 6-2, 6-3

Syed Fazluddin (Ind) bt Zhu Ben-Qiang (Chn) 7-6 (7/3), 6-3, 6-4

• Spain 1 Brazil 1
Carlos Moya (Spa) bt Fernando Meligeni (Bra) 6-2, 6-7 (3/7), 6-0, 6-4

Gustavo Kuerten (Bra) bt Alex Corretja (Spa) 6-3, 6-4, 7-5

• Germany 1 Russia 0
Tommy Haas (Ger) bt Marat Safin (Rus) 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-3, 2-6, 9-7

Asia/Oceania Group Two
• Taipei 1 Qatar 0
Wei-Jen Cheng (Tpe) bt Sultan Al-Alawi (Qat) 6-3, 6-0, 6-4

• Kazakhstan 2 Sri Lanka 0
Alexei Kedriouk (Kaz) bt Asiri Iddamalagoda (Sri) 6-3, 3-6, 6-0, 6-4

Pavel Baranov (Kaz) bt Jayendra Wijeyesekera (Sri) 5-7, 4-6, 6-4, 6-1, 6-1

NBA RESULTS

Toronto	88	Indiana	87
Detroit	107	Chicago	75
Philadelphia	88	Miami	84
New Jersey	90	Atlanta	85
New York	78	Cleveland	74
Dallas	93	LA Clippers	84
San Antonio	103	Vancouver	91
Denver	113	Seattle	110
Utah	88	Houston	87

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Kurdish rebel leader Ocalan meets relatives for first time in 21 years

ANKARA (AFP) — Jailed Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan on Friday met his brother and sister for the first time in more than 20 years on the prison island where he has been kept since his capture in February, one of the rebel leader's lawyer, Mahmut Sakar, said.

Ocalan's sister, Havva Keser, and his brother, Mehmet Ocalan, were allowed to meet the rebel leader "separately for 30 minutes each," the lawyer told AFP on the phone after their return from the island of Imrali in north-

western Turkey. Sakar, one of the two lawyers who travelled to the island with Ocalan's relatives, was unable to provide further details. "We did not witness the meetings," he said. It was the first family reunion since Ocalan founded the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) in 1978 and then left Turkey to lead the Kurdish armed campaign for a homeland from Syrian exile. In the 21 intervening years, Ocalan has been in touch only with his brother Osman, a commander in

the PKK's armed wing. Keser and Mehmet Ocalan are Ocalan's first private visitors so far. Only his lawyers and a human rights delegation from the Council of Europe have been permitted to see him since his capture. "Other relatives of Ocalan also want to visit him. I think they will lodge a formal application to be granted permission to meet him," Sakar said without giving details. The lawyer added that he met Ocalan along with his colleague, Hatice Korkut, for an hour. "It was a positive meeting. We discussed details of his defence," Sakar said. The lawyer said that Ocalan had repeated his calls for a democratic solution to the Kurdish problem in Turkey's southeast. "We will announce the details later," he said. Ocalan is currently awaiting a treason trial in connection with the PKK's armed campaign since 1984 for Kurdish self-rule in southeastern Turkey. Violence connected with the conflict has claimed almost 31,000 lives.

After Yugoslavia, Israel could be next — Sharon

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon believes Israel should refrain from supporting the NATO strikes on Yugoslavia because the Jewish state could itself be a victim in future, an Israeli newspaper reported Friday. "If Israel supports the type of action that's going on in Kosovo, it risks becoming the next victim," Sharon told a meeting of his close aides, according to the Yediot Aharonot newspaper. "Imagine that one day the Arabs of Galilee decide to demand autonomy for their region and join up with the Palestinian National Authority," he said, warning that any attempt to force a solution in that case would be "very dangerous" for Israel. Sharon said the European states have led the Americans into a "terrible operation" in Yugoslavia. "Brutal intervention must not be legitimised as a way to try to impose a solution in regional conflicts," he was quoted as saying. "Far from easing the conflict, the American bombardments have caused suffering and sent tens of thousands of refugees fleeing." In a statement Thursday, however, the foreign ministry said Sharon's remarks had been distorted. "His position is the terrible human tragedy in Yugoslavia and particularly Kosovo must be brought to an end immediately," the ministry said.

Turkish army curbs foreign non-military ties — paper

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkey's powerful military has stopped holding meetings with foreign parliamentarians and civilian groups in the hope of deflecting Western criticism that it intervenes in politics, a newspaper said on Friday. Hurriyet, frequently used as a conduit for statements by the influential military, said Chief of Staff Huseyin Kivrikoglu had introduced a policy under which the general staff would receive only foreign military delegations. The military, regarded as the guardians of Turkey's secularist democracy, have staged three coups since 1960 and wield considerable influence over Ankara's fractious parliament.

Kivrikoglu, though widely regarded as a strong personality, has studiously kept a low profile than the previous command. One of the obstacles to Turkish accession to the European Union is the broadly-held belief in diplomatic circles that the military ultimately holds sway over politicians in Ankara. The military insists the fact that the general staff is not subordinate to the defence ministry does not imply that the generals are ascendant. Last month, however, Kivrikoglu publicly warned deputies against moves to delay general elections, exerting pressure which helped to keep polls on schedule for April 18.

"The new practice was influenced by the West's criticism that the army intervenes in politics" and reports by delegations visiting the general staff to the effect that "the army interferes with government," Hurriyet said. It said the decision also applied to foreign journalists who requested meetings. There was no indication that the decision would affect the general staff's activities domestically. Hurriyet said the change in policy emerged when the military halted its practice of meeting U.S. congressional delegations. The general staff said it was more appropriate for U.S. congressmen to hold talks with Turkish parliamentarians.



SPRING TIME IN LONDON: Tulips in Parliament Square bloom on Friday as temperatures in the capital rose above 20 Celsius for the Easter weekend (AP photo)

Mobile phone swap does robber in

HONG KONG (R) — A thief robbed a taxi driver of his mobile phone but was caught because he left his own phone behind, a newspaper reported. The phone not only provided the home number of the robber, Kwok Chi-Hoi, it also made identification easy because it had a picture of him and his girlfriend on it, the South China Morning Post said. Kwok, 22, who stole HK\$3,300 (\$426) from the taxi driver as well as the phone, pleaded guilty to robbery and was jailed on Thursday for four years and eight months; the paper said.

Soldiers make a killing at Pol Pot's grave

PHNOM PENH (R) — Cambodian soldiers stationed near the grave of Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot are cashing in on his notoriety by charging \$5 to visit the site, a newspaper reported on Friday. The Phnom Penh post said a wood and thatch structure had been built over the site of Pol Pot's funeral pyre in the northern province of Anlong Veng and his house was being rebuilt. Soldiers had begun charging visitors 200 Thai baht (about \$5) to visit the grave, part of a plan, an officer said, to restore the site and make it into a museum. Such entrepreneurial spirit would be enough to make Pol Pot, one of the 20th century's most notorious political leaders, turn in his grave.

From coal mining to sushi

LONDON (R) — Once grimy British coal miners now don hygienically clean white uniforms to make the Japanese delicacy sushi. Many were unemployed for years after pit closures. Now they refresh the chance of making the raw fish and rice specialties at a factory just opened on the site of a disused colliery near workshop in central England. The Independent newspaper quoted ex-miner Mark Orwin as saying he had never heard of sushi, increasingly trendy in Britain, before starting work at the factory. "I used to work a lot of machinery down the pit, although it is obviously different stuff here, smaller of course, but you can get on with it," Orwin said. Factory manager Sally Mitchell told the newspaper the former miners had proved adaptable. "We started them off on sandwiches to get them used to it," she said.

Mother arrested for forcing son to rob

TOKYO (AP) — A Japanese woman has been arrested and charged with forcing her 12-year-old son to rob a Tokyo bar with a toy pistol so she could pay off a debt, police said Friday. The 38-year-old woman, arrested Tuesday, made the boy wear a shopping bag over his head with eye-holes cut out of it and told him to hold up a bar in downtown Tokyo. The boy, in the first year of junior high school, made away with 400,000 yen (\$3,330) in the Jan. 6, 1998 robbery, the Tokyo metropolitan police said. The police would not say how much money the woman owed, but newspapers reported her debt totalled 900,000 yen (\$7,500).

Summer camp going to the dogs

TORONTO (R) — Dogs who enjoy swimming, canoeing and socialising can now escape endless days of sleeping and gnawing bones by taking a trip through the Canadian wilderness at an exclusive summer camp for pooches. A pet-sitting company called Dog Day Adventures is offering camping for dogs this summer in the lush Algonquin park and Georgian bay regions, north of Toronto. "We recognise that dogs need a lot more than just a walk," Company founder Denise Wilson-Woodside told Reuters. To alleviate the ennui of yet another walk, dogs are offered swimming, hiking, canoe rides, picnics and even massages.

SPLA say hostages died in rescue attempt

NAIROBI (AFP) — The rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) said Friday that three government officials and a Red Crescent worker who were reportedly executed died when government soldiers stormed the insurgents' camp in a rescue bid. "Sometime last week, government soldiers stormed our camp in an attempt to rescue the captives and in the ensuing fight, the four and several SPLA soldiers were killed," said SPLA spokesman Samson Kwaje told AFP. "They were caught in the crossfire," he insisted. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said on Thursday that it had been informed that the four hostages, whom the SPLA termed prisoners of war, were executed. The four were captured by the SPLA in southern Sudan on Feb. 18, along with two expatriate ICRC delegates, but the two Swiss nationals were released on March 12. The SPLA said last month that it had established that one of the four, John Gatoy, was a trucking officer with the Sudanese Red Crescent and that it intended to set him free. The three others who had been proved "beyond any doubt" to be spies were being detained for further interrogation, according to the SPLA. The SPLA earlier gave their names as: — Ismail Eddam Ibrahim, a security officer from the military intelligence unit attached to an oil company prospecting for oil in Bentiu area with additional assignment of monitoring SPLA troop movement. — Abdu Ahmad Tia, a retired military officer working as a local administrator in Pariang rural council in Bentiu county. — Chief Mayilik Chol Bilkuei, a former SPLA non-commissioned officer (NCO) who defected from the SPLA in 1991 and became the commander of a tribal militia serving the government.

On March 6, SPLA spokesman Kwaje said the hostages were apprehended by rebel fighters as they drove to Pariang, a contested area, where both Sudanese government and the SPLA have troops, after landing by plane in Bentiu. Bentiu is under the control of the government and its allied militia led by Riek Machar. Machar, now a deputy to Sudanese President Omar Bashir, was an ally of the main rebel. SPLA leader Colonel John Garang before he defected to Khartoum. Since 1983, the conflict between the Arab-Muslim north and the majority Christian and animist south has left between one million and 1.5 million people dead, mostly victims of war-related famine and disease. President Gaafar Muhammad Nimeri's decision in that year to bring an end to

the autonomous status of the south (dating from the Addis Ababa agreement of 1972) and enforce Islamic Sharia law provoked an outbreak of hostilities after 11 years of peace. John Garang, a dissident colonel, founded the SPLA in a bid to end domination of the African south by the Arabised, Muslim north. Numerous rounds of talks aimed at ending the conflict have failed to resolve the dispute. The last round of negotiations in Addis Ababa last August broke up in dismay after both sides failed to agree on the wording of a joint communiqué. Both sides acknowledged that they do not agree on two key points: the definition of southern Sudan and separation of state and religion. They also disagreed on whether the country should be run on federal or confederal lines before a referendum on the future of the south.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Arafat to visit Japan next week

TOKYO (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat will make a two-day visit to Japan starting April 7 to hold talks with Japanese officials over the Middle East peace process, Foreign Minister Masahiko Kōmura said Friday. "[Arafat] is to meet with me and Prime Minister Keizo Ōuchi, and we would like to exchange our views on the Middle East peace process," Kōmura told a news conference.

Hamas rips Milosevic

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) slammed Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic on Friday as a "butcher" presiding over the "massacre" of ethnic Albanian Muslims in Kosovo province. "Hamas is following with great concern and anger the bloody massacre which the Serbian forces have been perpetrating under the direction of the butcher Slobodan Milosevic against the Muslims of Kosovo," Hamas said in a statement. These actions "resemble the terrorist slaughter which the Zionists carried out and continue to carry out against the Palestinian people," Hamas charged.

Iranian cleric condemns Serbs, NATO

TEHRAN (R) — A senior Iranian cleric on Friday denounced Serbian brutality against Muslims in Kosovo but said NATO strikes on Yugoslavia were aimed only at boosting U.S. supremacy. "The Serbs are truly oppressive and someone must put an end to this tyranny," former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani said in a sermon at Tehran's Friday prayers, carried on state radio. But he denounced punitive NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia as dangerous and designed to boost U.S. dominance. "There is no goodwill... This is Europe's eastern gate and NATO considers this as its own territory," said Rafsanjani, who heads the Expediency Council, a key political arbitration body. "The danger is that Muslims will get nothing. This is a wrong move that derives from a position of arrogance, with the excuse of protecting the oppressed," he said. Iran, which currently chairs the 55-member Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), has called for negotiations to end the killings and expulsion of Muslim ethnic Albanians from Kosovo.

SLA militiaman wounded

MARIJAYOUN (AFP) — A member of the Israeli-allied South Lebanon Army militia was wounded Friday in a bomb attack by Hizbollah guerrillas in the Israeli-occupied zone in south Lebanon, the SLA said. The militiaman was hit when an explosive device blew up in the path of an SLA patrol in the western sector of the zone, it said. The Shiite Muslim Hizbollah claimed responsibility for the attack, which it said caused several casualties. One SLA soldier has been killed and more than 10 others wounded in attacks, mostly by Hizbollah guerrillas who are fighting to end Israel's 21-year occupation of south Lebanon. Last year, 35 SLA men were slain and 50 others wounded.

Barak maintains lead over Netanyahu

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Labour opposition leader Ehud Barak is maintaining his narrow lead over right-wing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ahead of elections for the premiership this summer, two opinion polls published on Friday suggested. Both polls gave Barak a lead of three per cent over Netanyahu, well within the margins of error cited by the pollsters. The Labour leader would win 46 per cent of the vote against 43 per cent for Netanyahu, as expected, the two men meet head-to-head in a second round run-off on June 1, according to a poll in the mass circulation daily Yediot Aharonot. The other poll, in the daily Maariv, gave Barak 45 per cent against 42 per cent for the prime minister. Both polls found a large number of don't knows — 11 per cent in Yediot and 13 per cent in Maariv. In the first round on May 17, Netanyahu would head the six candidates standing but fall well short of the absolute majority needed to avoid a run-off, both polls found. Yediot gave Netanyahu 36 per cent against 33 per cent for Barak and 17 per cent for former Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai who heads a new centrist party. Maariv gave Netanyahu and Barak the same shares of the vote but gave Mordechai only 12 per cent.

Christians in disarray over new door for church

By Catherine Dupeyron
Agence France Presse

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM — Israel has sparked sharp disagreement among the Holy Land's Christian communities by pressing for a new door to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to cope with the millions of pilgrims expected for the Millennium. The director of Christian relations at the Israeli ministry of religious affairs, Uri Mor, told representatives of the Christian communities that with only one door for both entrance and exit, and thousands of visitors every day, the church is fundamentally unsafe. "The problem is gaining the consent of the different Christian communities... who have agreed on the principle but not on exactly where the door should be," Mor told AFP. "If there was a fire it would be a disaster. A new door could be put in three days and the [Israeli] government is ready to pay," he said. The number of pilgrims that the church can accommodate safely would jump if another door were to be opened in the walls, Mor told the Christian leaders. But the thorny questions of the location of the door, where the passage leading to it should be situated and who should hold the key to the new entrance have yet to be decided



An Israeli soldier and several tourists stand near the entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on Friday (AFP photo)

The level of mutual suspicion is such that the key to the present door of the church has been guarded for centuries by members of a Muslim family who are responsible for opening up each morning. Each community has a veto over any change or innovation because consensus is the central principle of the so-called status quo agreement governing arrangements at the church, the holiest site in the Christian world. Three smaller communities — the Syrian Orthodox, the Copts and the Ethiopians — have limited rights within and around the church. According to the Armenians and the Franciscans, the new door should be opened in the Greek Orthodox part of the building, but the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem has refused comment on the request. On the question of the passageway leading to the door, "the most natural route would be through the section belonging to the Ethiopians," according to Father Emilio Barrena, the director of the Christian Information Centre. "But in that case, they [the Ethiopians] would be left with nothing because they have such a small space. Perhaps we should think of giving them somewhere else to compensate," he said. The church stands over the site where most Christians

believe Jesus Christ was crucified and buried, to rise from the dead after the three-day Easter being celebrated this weekend. It had 12 doors when it was built in its current form by the Crusaders in the 12th century. But Saladin, the Muslim commander who defeated the Crusaders in 1187, ordered that 11 of the doors be bricked up. Ever since, the church has had only one door. Confessional wrangling has slowed down other work to the church in the past. The renovation of the dome which stands above the supposed tomb of Christ was only finished last year despite the fact that work started 44 years previously. "Any other church of this size with only one door would have been closed long ago," said Robert Fortin, the secretary of a Christian body organising the Millennium celebrations in Jerusalem. "Any other government in the world would not have accepted such a situation. But the Israeli government is sympathetic and it is true that shutting the church would have repercussions around the world," he said. The problem becomes more and more pressing as the celebrations approach marking 2,000 years of the Christian era. The church is currently visited by some 600,000 pilgrims annually, but Mor estimates that 1.5 million people will visit next year.